THE MAGAZINE OF

Fantasy AND Science Fiction

ISAAC ASIMOV
Bridging The Gaps

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THE FATAL FULFILLMENT
a complete short novel by
POUL ANDERSON

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Fantasy and Science Fiction

MARCH • 21ST YEAR OF PUBLICATION

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A new Poul Anderson story is always an occasion; the background of this latest one is unusual and interesting. Five of science fiction's best storytellers were asked to write a novella beginning from a common prologue (written by Keith Laumer), to be combined in a book called FIVE FATES. *The Anderson story and one by Frank Herbert (coming up soon) will be published in F&SF. We suggest that you look for the book (out in August from Doubleday) in order to catch up with the others: by Keith Laumer, Gordon Dickson and Harlan Ellison.*

THE FATAL FULFILLMENT

BY POUL ANDERSON

PROLOGUE

"Left hand," the thin man said tonelessly. "Wrist up."

Douglas Bailey peeled back his cuff; the thin man put something cold against it, nodded toward the nearest door.

"Through there, first slab on the right," he said

"Just a minute," Bailey started. "I wanted—"

"Let's get going, buddy," the thin man said. "That stuff is fast."

Bailey felt something stab up under his heart. "You mean—you've already . . . that's all there is to it?"

"That's what you came for, right? Slab one, friend. Let's go."

"But—I haven't been here two minutes—"

"Whatta you expect—organ music? Look, pal," the thin man shot a glance at the wall clock. "I'm on my break, know what I mean?"

"I thought I'd at least have time for . . . for . . ."

"Have a heart, chum. You make it under your own power, I don't have to haul you, see?" The thin man was pushing open the door, urging Bailey through into an odor of chemicals and unlive flesh. In

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a narrow, curtained alcove, he indicated a padded cot.

"On your back, arms and legs straight out."

Bailey assumed the position, tensed as the thin man began fitting straps over his ankles.

"Relax. It's just if we get a little behind and I don't get back to a client for maybe a couple hours and they stiffen up . . . well, them issue boxes is just the one size, you know what I mean?"

A wave of softness, warmness swept over Bailey as he lay back.

"Hey, you didn't eat nothing the last twelve hours?" The thin man's face was a hazy pink blur.

"I awrrr mmmm," Bailey heard himself say.

"OK, sleep tight, paisan . . ." The thin man's voice boomed and faded. Bailey's last thought as the endless blackness closed in was of the words cut in the granite over the portal to the Euthanasia Center:

". . . send me your tired, your poor, your hopeless, yearning to be free. To them I raise the lamp beside the brazen door . . ."

Then the poison immobilized his hemoglobin and he was dead.

Death was a stormwind. It was as if he were blown, whirled, cast up and down and up again, in a howl and a whistle and a noise of monstrous gallopings. He did not know whether the wind was searing him with cold or heat. Nor did he wonder about it, for the lightnings blinded his eyes and the thunders rattled his teeth.

Eyes? flashed a moment's startlement. Teeth? But I'm dead. That application I had to fill out in triplicate will be stamped COMPLETED, and a bored attendant will wheel me and my box to the crematorium chute and yo-heave-ho. And I will be transfigured, I will no more be Douglas Bailey but a statistic.

He clawed after reality, any reality, but grabbed only chaos. Dizziness sucked him through an infinite spiral. Somewhere and everywhere God was counting, "Zero, one, ten, eleven, one hundred, one hundred one, one hundred ten, one hundred eleven, one thousand, one thousand one, one thousand ten," in a small dry voice. Bailey believed that his nonexistent stomach had turned into an octopus with guts for tentacles. It would eat him and thus itself, but that was all right, because the universe inside Douglas Bailey was topologically identical with Douglas Bailey inside the universe, and so maybe when the universe swallowed itself he would be free of his madness.

Must be sensory deprivation, he thought in the maelstrom. Being dead, I have no body, therefore no senses, therefore no sensory input, therefore I hallucinate, therefore I must already have been reduced to ash; as I have no

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way to gauge time, if time has any meaning after death, centuries may have gone since I became a statistic. Poor little statistic, blown forever in the storm and the counting. I shouldn't have been in such a hurry to die.

Why was I?

I can't remember. I can't remember. There were the buildings, yes, and tastefully landscaped grounds. I entered—did I?—yes, I think I came in looking for, oh, counsel. Maybe someone to tell me I wasn't that badly off yet, that I ought to go home and think it over. But already my transformation had begun. The moment I crossed that threshold, I was not a man but a category, to be shunted from desk to desk, courteously, smoothly, but so fast I had no chance to think, inexorably to that room at the corridor's end.

What went before my last hour? I don't know.

"One hundred thousand one hundred ten," counted God, "one hundred thousand one hundred eleven, one hundred thousand one thousand."

I don't know! the statistic screamed. I can't remember!

"One hundred thousand one thousand one, one hundred thousand one thousand ten."

Why did they do it to me? cried the fragments. Why did they let me? They knew I was too sick to think.

"One hundred thousand one thousand eleven."

More than that. Too many more of us. But giving us our freedom to choose death was no freedom. They murdered us.

"One hundred thousand one thousand one hundred."

Shut up, damn You! Where were You when they murdered me? Why did You let them? They were no saner than the pathetic swarms, psychotic, neurotic, psychoneurotic they invited to come to die. That was no way to behave. They could have cured us—could have tried, anyhow—they should not have—

Click, said God. And there was silence, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.

—not have given us that saving-their-own-smugness "choice." They should have shouldered their responsibility to us, committed us, compelled us to get well.

Let there be Douglas Bailey. And there was Douglas Bailey.

FATE THE SECOND

They caught him practicing solitary vice in his bachelor apartment. The door flew open. Two large men entered. "Stop where you're at," one of them said in a gravel-truck basso. "Hands up. Stand back. This is a raid."

The fact was like a boot to the stomach. Bailey lurched, almost

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fell, and strangled for breath. Sunlight and traffic murmurs through an open window, familiar shapes of chairs, tables, drapes, clean smell of turpentine, were suddenly unreal in his awareness. Instead he knew his pulsebeat, sweat on his skin, strength gone from his knees.

"Okay," said the other detective to the building superintendent. That little man cowered in the hall. "Beat it."

"Y-yes, sir. Right away!"

"But don't leave your own place. Somebody will want to talk with you later."

"Of course," chattered the superintendent. "Anything I can do to help." He scuttled from sight.

He must have furnished a passkey, Bailey thought in the sickness that held him by the throat. So every precaution had been for nothing.

"Well, well, well." The first detective planted himself before the easel. "Whaddayou think of this, Joe?"

"Looks like a case for sure." They were hard to tell apart, those two, when one's mind was splitting with terror. They were dressed alike in correctly drab civilian clothes; they were both crew-cut, slab-faced, and overpoweringly big; they regarded his work with equal, slightly sickened distaste, as if it were the leftovers from an ax murder.

"But that's just a hobby of mine!" Bailey heard himself croak. "I never—I never—never any secret—everybody knows I paint pictures—why, the President recommends hobbies—"

"This kind of picture?" Joe snorted.

"You don't show stuff like this around, do you, now?" Joe's companion added.

No, Bailey thought. *I was careful.*

Item: The conventional works he turned out, landscapes, portraits, tinkering with them like Penelope with her web. They bored him, but should have forestalled any curiosity about the art supplies in his home.

Item: His door locked whenever he painted in earnest. A false-backed cabinet open, ready to receive and conceal the canvas, a standard picture half finished and ready to substitute, in a total fifteen seconds of well-rehearsed motions . . . should there be a knock. Since the apartment was on a third floor, with a warehouse across the street, he had not needed to arouse suspicion by drawing any blinds.

Item: The location, not very convenient to his work, but right in the Haight-Ashbury district. Before the Mental Health Act, this had been a traditional hangout for eccentrics. Therefore it had been so thoroughly treated and cleansed—the very buildings

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torn down, reconstructed in hygienic styles, redevoted to sound purposes—that it became the most respectable part of San Francisco. Surveillance was close around the waterfront or Nob Hill. But the bourgeoisie of Haight-Ashbury? Why, they had the highest average stability index in the city.

Item: The whole concealment that was his life.

Was that what betrayed him in the end: himself? Too much laughter, or too little; insufficient ambition, negligence within social organizations, too little chastity or too much—had something like that made someone think Douglas Bailey had better be reported as a possible psycho? Maybe, maybe, maybe. But how was a sane man supposed to behave?

"Awright," Joe said, "let's see your cards."

"But it, it's only a painting . . . manner of Van Gogh—"

"Which ear do you figure to cut off?" Joe asked surprisingly. Or perhaps not surprisingly. They said the mental health squad of this town maintained a collection of pathological, pornographic, and other prohibited works that compared favorably with the FBI's.

The other man continued staring at the violent blues and yellows of the buttercup field Bailey had been doing. "Flowers don't grow that big," he said. "And you got no perspeckative." He shook his head, clicked his tongue. "Man, you're sick."

"That's for the Clinic to decide," Joe said. "But let's see those cards, Mac."

Bailey got out his wallet in a mechanical fashion. Joe flipped through the driver's license, work permit, draft card, immunization record, permit to consume alcoholic beverages, social security, library card— "Hey, whatcha doing with a Class B?"

"I'm a sociologist," Bailey mumbled. "Research. I need to consult specialized books sometimes . . . journals—"

"Yeah? Next thing you'll put in for a Class A, huh, and maybe check out a copy o' Krafft-Ebbing?" Joe laughed, but kept on until he found the psychocheck record.

"See," Bailey got past the dryness in his gullet. "Properly punched. Every year for the, the . . . past six years? . . . just as the law requires. Last time was . . . four months ago?"

"Look, friend," Joe said with elaborate weariness, "let's not play games. You know how much one lousy annual EEG shows, when you got three hundred million people in the country to give it to. If that could spot all the whackos, I'd be out of a job, wouldn't I, now?" He tucked the wallet inside his coat. "You might as well sit down, Bailey. In that corner, out of the way. Come on, Sam,

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let's give this place the once over quick."

The other man nodded and went to the bookshelf. From his pocket he extracted a list of titles which he compared with those on the volumes. It was a slow process, especially since everything in a dust wrapper must be opened, and others at random to be certain nothing had been rebound. His lips moved. Joe was more organized, ransacking drawers like a terrier chasing rats.

Bailey sat in an armchair as directed. A numbness crept up into him. Why care? What did it matter? If only he could sleep. *Perchance to dream, to sleep, to die. . . . No, wait, there you go. Withdrawal. Retreat. The wish for isolation. The basic schizoid pattern, that you've fought, adapted to (?), hidden ever since the treatment of mental illness was made compulsory—because I am not insane, not, not, not.*

But I am so tired. If only the world would go away and leave me alone.

After an hour, Joe and Sam compared notes. They hadn't found the secret compartment, but there appeared to be significance in various other items. Bailey didn't know what or which. He was sure that he'd left nothing forbidden out in the open. But no doubt the law allowed a good many things, simply because their possession was indicative to the trained eye. Bailey had no idea what the things might be—psychiatric information above the most elementary level wasn't available to anyone without an A card—and the detectives muttered too low for him to overhear much.

It didn't matter. His apathy had reached black full tide.

"Okay, we'll take him in and arrange for a detail to come and pull this joint apart," Joe said.

"You mean you and me didn't?" Sam must be new to this business, probably transferred from another division.

"Sheest, no! Why'd you think orders is to put everything back the way you found it? A real expert can tell from, uh, the way his underwear is folded, whether down underneath the whacko wants to murder his father or hump his mother."

"Or both?" Sam grinned.

"In this case, could be, I guess. You remember we got an urgency warrant on him. 'Nother reason why we better get him up there pronto." Joe strode to the chair—the floor trembled ever so faintly beneath his weight—and grabbed Bailey's arm. "On your feet, tubehead. Got a nice doctor waiting to see you."

Bailey dragged along with them. They stopped to lock the door and placard it. Word must have run through the building, for the corridors and stairs were empty. Footfalls echoed.

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The sunlight outside was heartlessly brilliant, pouring from a summer sky where a few gulls wheeled on rakish wings. Such a day even managed to brighten the stiff utilitarian facades that lined the street, the stiff utilitarian garments of pedestrians going soberly about their business. Cars purred past with electric quiet; *they* still had a certain gaudiness, Bailey thought. The police vehicle was unmarked, a 1989 Chevrolet, and therefore it had a bubble canopy.

In a flicker of rebellion, Bailey exclaimed, "Why?"

Joe gave him a hard look. "Why what?"

"Civilian cars. Required to have fully visible interiors. Isn't that carrying our anti-privacy fetish to ridiculous extremes?"

Sam pulled out a notebook and started writing. "How do you spell 'ridiculous'?" he asked.

"Oh, never mind," Joe said. Bailey fell silent again. Joe unlocked the car and took the wheel. The other two sat in the rear. Because Bailey had no wish to look at either of his captors, he stared out at the view as it passed.

They went by the local service telly. For the first time since he had moved to his area and learned to ignore that screen, he paid attention. It was set into a wall near a bus stop. As usual when there was no particular announcement to make, it urged hygiene upon the public.

"Not like this!" it shouted, and for a moment flashed the image of a squalid person who crouched and gibbered while picking imaginary fleas off himself. The moment was short, lest a latent hypochondria be triggered in some viewer. "Like this!" There followed an all-American family, stalwart father, beautiful though decorous and not too bosomy mother, four healthful children, marching into the future with toothpaste smiles. The children were, in order, one Nordic, one Negro, one Oriental, and one whose Jewish nose was exaggerated precisely enough to be unmistakable. The avoidance of tension-producing minority-group grievances was, after all, more important than strict genetics. "Yes, like this!" (Flourish of trumpets) "To be clean, to be straight, to be happy—" (Ruffle of drums) THINK CLEAN! THINK STRAIGHT! THINK HAPPY!"

A little further on was a poster which, Bailey recalled, offered a reward of ten thousand dollars ($10,000) for information leading to the arrest and treatment of any person suffering from unreported psychic disorder.

On the sidewalk nearby, a uniformed policeman handed a summons to a middle-aged woman. Maybe she'd back-talked him, maybe it was a spot check; at any rate, Bailey recognized the pink slip. "You are hereby directed to

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report to the center at which you are registered . . . prior to the date of . . . examination and recertification of nervous stability . . . failure to comply without proof of impossibility will result in—" The woman looked more annoyed than frightened. You wouldn't have gotten as drastic a measure as the Act passed if a majority of the public had not felt something ought to be done about the growing incidence of mental illness. And the law would not have been enforceable without the cooperation of that same majority.

The police car took a route through a corner of Golden Gate Park, past Kezar Stadium. A grade-school hygiene class sat on the lawn, in neat white uniforms. Before them stood their teacher. She was young and comely, and you didn't often see that much exposed female flesh any more. (What a narrow tightrope to walk, between causing shame at natural functions on the one hand and exciting prurient interest on the other!) Once Bailey had enjoyed such spectacles. He would switch his attention from what she had chanted: "—Now, children, this is Goodthinking time. Let us first think about the beautiful sunshine. A one, and a two, and a three, and a four . . ." But today he was enclosed in his private night. And the car whipped him by too fast.

The street climbed steeply, until at its crest the Clinic buildings appeared like sheer cliffs. Bailey remembered when this had been the University Medical Center. But that was before a single class of diseases got absolute priority.

The car stopped at the main gate for identification. Beyond a pair of burly guards could be seen the usual queue at the dispensary: outpatients, borderline cases required to report daily for their prescribed tranquilizers. In spite of all the propaganda about emotional problems being no more disgraceful than any other kind, the line shuffled in the entrance with hanging heads, and slunk out the exit, each individual alone. The attendant who kept them moving was bored and hardly polite.

Still . . . maybe I could have escaped with that, Bailey thought. *Had I confessed the turmoil in me at the very beginning, maybe it could have been arrested, I could have been adjusted— But no.* He slumped. *I didn't want to be adjusted. I wanted to go my own way. And now it's too late.* In his wretchedness, he hardly noticed when the car started again, or when it stopped and he was conducted into the very biggest house. The elevator that bore him upward, though, was so like a coffin built for three that he must struggle not to scream.

Afterward there was a long hall, featureless, white, faintly rustling, faintly odorous of anti-

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septic. At the end was an office with a counter. An orderly sat behind it. Behind him, in turn, worked a number of secretaries and machines. They paid no attention to the new arrival.

"Here he is," Joe said. "Bailey."

"So let's get positive ID," the orderly said. He picked a form off a stack and handed it, with a pen, to Bailey. It was clipped together with several carbons. "Fill this out."

"I guess not," the orderly said. "Only if you don't, that proves you're incapable and you get an automatic commitment."

Bailey wrote. Afterward he was finger-scanned and retinoscoped. "Yep, that's him," the orderly said. "You boys can go now." He scribbled on a slip. "Your receipt."

"Thanks," Joe said. "So long, Mac. See you in the nut bowl. Come on, Sam." The detectives left.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HYGIENE
Northern California Facility
APPLICATION FOR TREATMENT

Form 1066 Print or type

Name_____ Date_____
(last) (first) (middle) (month) (day) (year)

Sex M__ F__ MH__ FH__ Other (specify) _____

Registry number_____ Birthdate_____
(month) (day) (year)

Address_____ Occupation_____

Employer_____ Address_____

Name of spouse_____ Registry number_____
(If none, write "none.")

(NB: If status is widowed or divorced, attach Schedule B-1.)

Children (List name, age, and sex of each minor child now living. Put only one child per line and use only one line per child. If none, write "none." If more space is needed, attach Schedule C-2.)

_____

_____

_____

Other dependents . . . Religious preference (If none, write "Ecumenical.") . . . Outstanding debts . . .

Bailey raised his eyes.

"But this is an application," he said weakly. "I don't have to fill it out, do I?"

The orderly spoke on an intercom. "You're in luck, Bailey," he reported. "Dr. Vogelsang can see you right away. I've known 'em

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to wait for three days before a doctor is free. Gets kind of dull."

Bailey followed him out into the hall, as a man walks helplessly though a dream. But the office which he reached startled him back to alertness. It was like nothing he had met hitherto. Fumed-oak paneling; deep rugs; a couple of tasteful Chinese scrolls; music, yes, by heaven, soft but absolutely the "Moonlight Sonata"; and the man behind the desk, small, white-haired, kindly featured, almost recklessly colorful in his garb. He rose to shake hands.

"Welcome aboard, Mr. Bailey," he smiled. "I'm so glad to meet you. That'll be all, Roger."

"You don't think he should be, uh, restrained?" the orderly asked.

"Oh, no," Dr. Vogelsang said. "Of course not." When the door had closed and they were alone: "You must excuse him, Mr. Bailey. Frankly, he's not too bright. But we have so big a job here, so much to do, we must manage with what personnel we can get. Please sit down. Cigarette? Or I have cigars here, if you prefer."

Bailey lowered himself into an extraordinarily comfortable chair. "I . . . I don't smoke," he said. "But if—a drink, maybe—?"

Vogelsang astounded him with a laugh. "Why, sure! Excellent idea. Don't mind if I do myself. The oldest tranquilizer, and still one of the best, eh? How about Scotch?" He used his intercom.

Bailey couldn't meet the twinkling eyes, but he did ask, "What got me brought here?"

"Oh, various information. People who have your welfare at heart. They suggested we check on you. And, frankly, there were some rather disturbing things in your record. Things that should have been studied more closely a long time ago—and would have been, eventually, but as I said, we're understaffed. We must depend to a large extent, as yet, on the patient himself, on his educated ability to recognize early symptoms, his educated willingness to come straight in for help." Dr. Vogelsang beamed. "But please don't imagine anyone is angry that you didn't. We realize that you aren't fully your own master at present. Our one desire is to cure you. You have a fine mind, intrinsically, you know, Mr. Bailey. Your IQ puts you in the upper five percent. Society needs minds like yours—minds liberated from guilts, terrors, metabolic imbalances, whatever makes them operate at less than half efficiency and makes the person so very unhappy—Ah. Here we are."

A nurse came in with a tray. On the tray stood bottle, ice bucket, glasses, soda. She smiled on Bailey as warmly as her boss.

"To your very good health," Vogelsang toasted.

"What . . . are you going to do?" Bailey dared say.

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"Why, nothing much. We'll want to run a lot of diagnostic tests and so on before we decide on any course of action. Don't worry. I'm convinced we'll have you out of here before Christmas."

The Scotch was good. The talk was pleasant. Bailey wondered if rumor might not have exaggerated what went on in the Clinic.

And, indeed, the first few days consisted of little more than interviews, multiphasic questionnaires, Rorschachs, narcosynthesis, laboratory studies—exhausting, often embarrassing, but in no way unendurable.

However, then they decided he belonged in Ward Seven. That was for the seriously disturbed cases.

In Ward Seven they tried shock; both insulin and electric. This reduced the notable IQ by a noticeable percentage. When that didn't work, they considered surgery, either prefrontal lobotomy or transorbital leucotomy. Since Bailey had by now met quite a few of the two-legged vegetables that resulted from such treatment, he screamed and tried to fight. He sobbed his gratitude when Dr. Vogelsang overruled the suggestion and ordered the new, somewhat experimental excitation therapy. For this, he was strapped down while a low-frequency current passed through his nerves. It was the ultimate pain. Dr. Vogelsang watched every minute.

"Tsk, tsk," he said after a week or two, and shook his white head. "No success, eh? Well, I'm afraid we can't continue like this. But we must dissolve those bad thought-patterns somehow, must we not? Your trouble doesn't seem to be in your glandular chemistry, you know. Nothing that simple. We'll use a few Pavlovian techniques and hope for the best."

Dream deprivation. Sleep deprivation. Cold. Heat. Hunger. Thirst. Ringing bells. Rewards when the proper thoughts were recited. Punishment when they were not. But the effects remained disappointing. At least, according to depth analysis they were; Bailey no longer knew what he believed. "Dear me, dear me," Dr. Vogelsang said, "I'm afraid we must go one step further. The Pavlovians often get decisive results with castration."

Bailey leaped to attack him, but the choke-collar leash brought him up short. "*You can't do this to me!*" he howled. "I've got my rights!"

"Come, now. Come, now. Be reasonable. You know as well as I, the Supreme Court declared the Mental Health Act constitutional under the interstate commerce clause. Please don't worry. The operation won't hurt a bit. I'll perform it myself. And of course, first we'll deep-freeze some spermatozoa. You'll want children after

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you're cured. Every normal man does."

But that didn't work either.

"I don't believe we should go further along these lines," said gentle Dr. Vogelsang. "They do have their distressing aspects, don't they? And in your case, for some reason they only seem to increase your basic hostility. I think we had better rebuild you."

"Rebuild?" Bailey's mind groped through the haze that had lately enclosed it. "Wuh. Kill me? You gonna kill me?"

"Oh, no! No, no, no! Gossip is *so* distorted, no matter how hard we attempt to enlighten the public. True, rebuilding has replaced capital punishment. But that doesn't mean you are a criminal. Rather, it means that the criminal is a sick man also, like you. We wouldn't dream of going back to the barbaric waste of legalized murder." Dr. Vogelsang grew quite indignant. "Especially in your case. You have a wonderful potential. It's merely being held down by bad attitudes that, unfortunately, have become integral to your personality. So—" he glowed—"we start over again. Eh? A recent technique, but perfectly safe, perfectly reliable. Electro-chemical treatment reverses the RNA formation which is the physical basis of memory. Every memory, every habit, every last, bad, old engram goes. You start out clean, fresh, sparkling new. A *tabula rasa* on which experts will inscribe a different, sane, outgoing, friendly, adjusted, efficient personality! Won't that be nice?"

"Uh," said Bailey. He wished they'd go away and let him sleep.

But when at length he was boxed in the helmet, secured to a bed while drugs dripped into his veins, and the whine rose, rose, rose, and he felt the departure of—

—sundown purple on the Eastbay hills; the first girl he had ever kissed, and the last; a curious old tavern, one summer when he was young and on a walking tour through England; white rush down a ski slope in the High Sierra; Shakespeare, Beethoven, Van Gogh; work, friends, father, mother, mother—

—the animal instincts revived, and he screamed aloud in his agony of terror: "If this isn't death, what is?"

Then the last trace of what he had done with his genetic endowment, and what had been done to it, was scrubbed from him and he was dead.

Death was a stormwind. It was as if he were blown, whirled, cast up and down and up again, in a howl and a whistle and a noise of monstrous gallopings. He did not know whether the wind was searing him with cold or heat. Nor did he wonder about it, for the lightnings blinded his eyes and

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the thunders rattled his teeth.

Eyes? flashed a moment's startlement. Teeth? But I'm dead. They'll use my body to make someone else. No, wait, that's not right. They'll cremate my body. I took voluntary euthanasia when I couldn't endure my own misery any longer. No, I didn't, either. I was wiped out of my own brain after they'd made me so miserable that it didn't really matter.

"Zero," God counted, "one, ten, eleven, one hundred, one hundred ten."

Bailey grabbed for reality, any reality, in the torrents of night. Dizziness sucked him through an infinite spiral. But the only reality was himself. He clutched that to him. I am Douglas Bailey, he thought against the devouring octopus. I am . . . I am . . . a sociologist. A madman. What else? I died twice, after two different horrible lives.

Were there more? I can't remember. The wind blows too hard.

Wait. A glimpse. No, gone.

"One thousand eleven," counted God the Simulator, "one thousand one hundred, one thousand one hundred one, one thousand one hundred ten."

Why are You doing this to me? Bailey screamed. You're as bad as they are. They killed me twice. Once with indifference. They called it freedom—freedom to choose death—but they didn't care about us, except they hoped we would reduce our own numbers. They withdrew from us, established automatic social machinery to process us, did their best to forget us. And again they killed me with hate. It had to be hate, cruelty, death wish, no matter how much they talked of cure. What else? How can you take a human being and make an object(ive) of him, unless your real aim is to make him less than human—make him a thing that crawls at your feet—because you hate his humanity?

"Ten thousand, ten thousand one, ten thousand ten, ten thousand eleven."

Space twisted back on itself and time split like the delta of the Styx. The wind blew and blew.

My problem was real. I was suffering. I needed help and love.

Click. The wind stopped. The darkness waited.

Please, wept Douglas Bailey. Help me. Care about me. Give me your love.

It was so.

FATE THE THIRD

Having finished his bathroom business, he suddenly spread his legs and looked between them.

Now why should I do that? he wondered. *I'm all there. Of course.*

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But not well, he reminded himself. *Severe nervous breakdown, possible incipient schizophrenia. I was doing less rational things than this before they persuaded me to come here.*

Pulling his trousers up again, he stared into the mirror above the sink. The image was tall and broad-shouldered. He didn't think Birdie Carol was lying to him when she praised his body, at least. It was deteriorating, though: too little exercise, too many drugs. He didn't like that, but never got together the energy to do anything about it. And the face was shocking, waxy cheeks, sunken smudge-circled eyes, the dark hair unkempt.

He had no way of measuring exactly his downhill progress. Few people did. The thing happened so gradually. But he knew that, after the brief euphoria that followed his admission to the hospital, he was getting worse fast. Mentally as well as physically—physically because mentally—he was in far poorer shape than when he entered.

Which shouldn't be. By every theory, it shouldn't be.

A tic in one eyelid. He turned from the spectacle. This made him confront the walls. They were pink, with painted teddy bears and hobby horses. He detested pink. "And I could do without kiddy pictures in the can too," he had grumbled.

Birdie had patted his knee. They were side by side on the living room couch. "I know, dear," she said, "but Dr. Breed thinks it's helpful in the long run. And frankly, I think he's right."

"How so?"

"Well, the idea is to recreate your childhood. That is, the love and trust and innocence you had then. I know that sounds silly, but a nursery motif ought to remind your poor subconscious of what it's lost, and remind it that there's a way back."

"What love and trust and innocence?" Bailey said. "I remember my childhood quite well, and it was perfectly typical. I was dragooned into school and loathed every minute. The neighborhood bully used to lie in wait for me on my way home and beat me up. But for some reason I never could tell my parents. Once or twice I read a ghost story, and lay awake every night for weeks, full of the horrors. My puppy was run over. I got caught at—"

"Hush, darling." She laid one large smooth hand across his lips and leaned close to him. The cologne she always wore smelled overpoweringly sweet. "I know. We mean an ideal childhood. You have to learn—deep, deep down inside—you have to learn how to love. And how to be loved. Then you'll be well."

"Look," he said, his exasperation growing geometrically, "sup-

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pose my trouble isn't an autistic neurosis or whatever label you've hung on. Suppose it's organic schizophrenia. What's that got to do with this love you keep mooing about?"

Birdie smiled with infinite patience. "Love is a basic requirement of the mammalian life form," she said. "We are mammalian life forms." Her build left no doubt of that. "Little babies in orphanages used to die because they weren't cuddled. If you get some love, but not enough, you mature starved for it. The deficiency warps and weakens you as rickets would. What we are doing is giving you the love you need to become straight and strong."

He jumped to his feet. "I've heard that over and over till I'm ready to vomit!" he shouted. "What about true psychosis?"

"Well, yes, I suppose that is a metabolic thing," Birdie answered. "Or so the scientists believe. Though I think every such illness must also start because there wasn't enough love. Don't you think so?"

"I—I—"

"In any event," she said, "schizophrenia amounts to a loss of communication with the outside world. We have no hope of a cure without re-establishing communication, have we? Just think, darling, and you'll see I'm right. But love is the bridge across all gaps."

Bailey longed to reply with a swear word, preferably obscene. But those he could recall were too feeble. Birdie rose, tossed back her blonde hair, and unbuttoned her dress. "I think we should make love again," she said briskly.

He hadn't much wanted to, but she urged him—and what the hell else was there to do?—so they ended in the bedroom. Only this time he hadn't been able to make anything happen. She was very sympathetic, cradled him in her arms and sang him to sleep. However, first he had needed a barbiturate.

Maybe that recollection was what had now made him worry about—*Nuts! Not a thing wrong with me in that department, except I've gotten so bloody fed up with—*

He left the bathroom. His suite was not large, but comfortable and pleasantly furnished. He prowled to the living room window and looked out. It was barred, but only against possible sleepwalking, he had been assured. He had the entire freedom of the grounds. As soon as he got better, he could draw weekend passes. Meanwhile, any loved ones he wished could come here to visit with him.

The view, from this twentieth floor of the largest building in the Medical Center, was magnificent in its distances. Golden Gate Park spread green toward the ocean,

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which blazed with sunlight. He glimpsed the bridge that soared across the bay's mouth, water glittering away to the hills of the eastern shore, gulls, boats, ships, aircraft. A breeze wandered in, cool, smelling of the sea, and brought a remote traffic sound.

Too remote, though; too muted; and apart from the pride that was this hilltop complex, San Francisco showed decay, here a vacant store window, there a seedy tenement. Business was spiraling downward just like Douglas Bailey. As a sociologist, he had seen the data. No doubt existed. Nor any reasonable doubt about the cause. If mental illness, at every level from mild eccentricity to complete insanity, was approaching epidemic proportions, and if the United States had assumed a national obligation to care for the victims as lavishly as was the case—the bill must be paid somehow. Between them, taxes and inflation were collecting it, with their usual side effects.

He'd argued against the policy. He still would, he supposed, in spite of having become one of its beneficiaries. But the warnings of that tiny minority to which he belonged were so much spent air. Either people refused to believe the facts of economic life, or they looked at you wide-eyed and asked, "Do you mean anything could be more important than the well-being of the people we love?"

Perhaps, he thought with brief and discouraged humor, the futility of his efforts had helped bring on the collapse that put him in here.

Then the sense of being caged and baited rose in him till he had no other awareness. He smashed his fist against the window sill, again and again and again. "God damn God. God damn God. God damn God." The chant gathered speed. "Goddamngod, goddamngod, goddamngod-goddamngod-goddamngodgoddamngodgoddamngodgoddamngodgoddamngod, WHOO-OO, WHOO-OO, ch-ch-ch, ch-ch-ch, ch-ch-ch—"

"Duggie! What are you *doing?*"

Bailey stopped. Very slowly he turned around. Birdie Carol's plump figure filled the hall doorway. She carried a bouquet of buttercups. As always, her dress was civilian, rather flamboyant, with merely a pin to indicate that she was a psychiatric technician.

He swallowed some of his rage, though he nearly strangled on it, and retorted, "I might ask you the same."

"Why, I came to see you." She closed the door and bustled toward him. "Look, I've brought you flowers. You told me once you like buttercups. I love them, myself."

"Busting in on me like a—like a—a buster-in—"

"But darling, I couldn't leave you isolated. That's your whole problem, you know, isolation.

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Think for a minute and you'll see that I'm right. You should go out more." Having reached him, she stopped and patted his shoulder. "You really should. Go join the other patients in the recreation rooms. They're wonderful people when you get to know them, really they are. And the social hostesses are such dears too. They want to help you . . . help you enjoy yourself, help you get strong again. What is that beautiful old German saying? You know the one, it means—"

"Kraft durch Freude," Bailey suggested.

"Does that mean 'strength through joy'? Because that's what I mean. But oh, dear, I must put these poor thirsty blossoms in water, mustn't I?" Birdie started off. Her yellow ringlets jiggled, but her hips swung like solid masses. There was, in fact, a solidity about every aspect of her, a kind of absolute physical control —*even in bed with him on a hot* afternoon, she hadn't sweated—that had been comforting at first: the Earth Mother image.

Only, should the Earth Mother babble?

"That was a Nazi motto," Bailey said.

"Oh, really? How interesting. You know so much, Duggie, darling. Once we get you well again, you'll be able to find so many wonderful ways to help others. Won't you?" She took an unbreakable plastic vase off a table and shook her head sadly at the dethorned roses already within. "Poor things. They have had their little day, I'm afraid. But if they helped brighten your life, that was their service, wasn't it?"

Bailey clenched his fists. "For instance," he said, "I know the Nazis gassed people who didn't fit into their scheme. But at least they didn't preach positive thinking at them."

"No, I suppose not." Birdie sent the roses reverently down the waste chute and took the vase, the buttercups, and her enormous handbag into the bathroom. "That poor man—Hitler, was that his name?—how he must have been starved for love!"

She left the door open. He could have avoided seeing pink walls, teddy bears, and hobby horses by looking out the window. But for some morbid reason, he had to stare in that direction. *Maybe, he thought, this enabled* him to hate them better.

"No doubt it was most unkind of other countries to make war on the Nazis," he said around his teeth.

Birdie set her handbag down on the flush tank and rummaged in it. "Certainly," she replied. "I'm not saying that their prisoners should not have been rescued. If there really were prisoners. You know what wartime propaganda is like. With— what is it?—fifty

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years' perspective, do you really and truly believe any human beings could behave that way? Honestly, I can't."

"I can. I know what historical evidence is. I also know how human beings behave right now. Committing violent crimes, say."

"Yes, yes, darling, but don't you understand? Let's suppose those awful things were true. Or let's be realistic and think about those deeds today that, yes, I know, they are done . . . by poor, bewildered victims of an unfeeling society. Now suppose that the people being attacked—or even people being herded into gas chambers and ovens, if they ever were—suppose they turned around and said, with love shining out of their eyes, 'You too are victims. You are our brothers. Come, let us embrace each other.' " Birdie leaned past the door to lay her own china-blue gaze directly upon him. "Don't you see what that would do? Can't you *feel* what a change would occur?"

"The method doesn't seem to have improved me any," Bailey said with a jerky gesture of shoulders.

"Well, it does take time." Birdie returned to her task. From her handbag she drew a pocketknife and began trimming the buttercup stems. "But true love is infinite," she said. "True love knows no impatience, no anger, no despair, no end."

He couldn't stop himself, he must take first one step toward her, then another, while a roaring mounted in his skull. "Do you love me?" he said in a voice that sounded remote and hollow to him. "Or am I just your assignment?"

"I love everyone," she cooed.

"In bed, too?"

"Oh, Duggie, love isn't jealous. Love is sharing. I use my body as just one way of loving you."

He was at the bathroom entrance, swaying on his feet. "But do you care for me?" he cried. "Me, alone, especially, not because I'm a, a, a featherless biped, but because I'm me!"

She didn't blush. He had never seen any such change in her creamy skin. But she did flutter her lashes downward. "Well," she murmured, "I have thought, sometimes, if it would make you happy, we could get married when you're well. Such a sweet name, don't you think? Birdie Bailey."

He screamed in his torment, snatched the knife from her, and cut and cut and cut.

"Please don't do that," she said. "That's not a loving act."

He slashed her belly open. For a moment, through the darkness that brawled around him, he saw the wires, transistors, thermogenic superconductor leads, heavy-duty accumulator. He would have stopped his assault, but his arm was already in motion.

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The knife sliced the insulation around a cable. The powerplant short-circuited through him. It felt like hatred, lovely clean hell-blue hatred coursing inward, possessing him, making him one with its Ragnarok tide. But when his heart went into fibrillation, that hurt.

In a cloud of smoke, Douglas Bailey fell on Birdie Carol.

Of course she's a machine, thought his last fragment of consciousness. *No human being could've kept that up.*

Then his pulse stopped and he was dead.

Death was a stormwind. It was as if he were blown, whirled, cast up and down and up again, in a howl and a whistle and a noise of monstrous gallopings. He did not know whether the wind was searing him with cold or heat. Nor did he wonder about it, for the lightnings blinded his eyes and the thunders rattled his teeth.

Eyes? flashed a moment's startlement. Teeth? But I'm dead . . . Wait a minute. Wait one bloody minute. How many deaths does that make?

"Zero," God counted, "one, ten, eleven, one hundred."

Why don't You give me a chance to think? He yelled, frustrated.

By concentrating, he could maintain a certain equilibrium in chaos. He was Douglas Bailey. Sociologist. Psychoneurotic. Ending his life in an institution—three different lives and three different institutions, each as bad as the others.

Why was the Simulator doing this to him?

Well, the problem was real enough. Psychopathology was on the increase. Society had to cope somehow.

But none of those three attempts was successful. Not really. Murderous indifference; murderous malevolence; murderous love. Which latter wasn't actually love at all—anyhow, not a healthy kind. It was nothing but another way of trying to force people back into the very structure that had warped them.

Love was acceptance of the loved one, whether he seem right or wrong; adjusting your behavior to his, within reasonable limits, not his to yours; giving him his freedom while always standing by to help if there should come trouble.

"One hundred eleven, one thousand, one thousand one."

If social conditions were responsible for the epidemic, the cure lay in a basic reform. Change the conditions. Take off the unendurable pressures.

Click. Chaos rested.

No more compulsions, ordered Douglas Bailey. Let's have the world's first genuinely free civilization.

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This he was granted.

FATE THE FOURTH

"Sure, I'm bitter," said the man who sat at Bailey's left. He was in his thirties, medium-sized, sandy-haired, and very drunk. "Who wouldn' be?" He finished his bourbon on the rocks and set it noisily down on the bar. " 'Nother," he called. To his companion: "You care for 'nother?"

"No, thanks," Bailey said.

"Aw, c'mon. I'll buy. Leas' I can do, way I been bending your ear. Good o' you t' listen, me a stranger an' so forth. But if Jim Wyman—tha's my name, Jim Wyman—if Jim Wyman weeps on a shoulder, Jim Wyman 'spec's t' pay f' privilege."

"That's okay," Bailey said. "I'm interested in what you're telling me. I've been away for some years, you see. Just got back today. Things have changed."

"They sure have, Mr., uh, Mr., they sure have. Place'll never be 'erself again, tha's f' sure. Bartender!" Wyman roared. "Where's 'at refill?"

Bailey clenched his jaw for an embarrassing scene. He didn't want to be thrown out. He wanted to rest in cool darkness, in the remembered elegance of mahogany and thick carpeting, nurse the single weak Scotch and water he dare allow himself, and spend an hour gathering back his courage. They had warned him that San Francisco, like every American city, had changed; they had not told him how shocking the change would be.

The bartender considered Wyman for a moment, shrugged and poured. Another symptom, Bailey thought. The Drake's Tavern would never have served an obvious drunk aforetime. But when you looked twice, you also saw how dusty and shabby the Elizabethan décor had gone.

"You were telling me you do R and D on computers," he said in the hope of quieting Wyman.

It worked. The man's voice even became less slurred. "Yes. At the Med Center. Or rather, I did. Till yestiddy. Not now. Projec' canceled. And it would'a been the bigges' breakthrough since—since —No, bigger. Fun-da-mental!"

"What was the project?"

It turned out to be something that Bailey had seen discussed in theoretical terms before he fell sick. Direct man-machine linkages were an old idea, and of course the powered prosthetic limbs, hooked into an amputee's nervous system, that had been developed around 1980, were a familiar case. But integration of the human brain and a computer presented difficulties on another order of magnitude. The connection wasn't the problem. You didn't need wires into the skull or any such nonsense. By amplification

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and induction, impulses could flow both ways, neuron to transistor and back again, through purely electromagnetic channels. But how to develop a common language, that was the question. It had never been shown that any particular encephalographic pattern corresponded to any particular thought, and indeed the evidence was against it. Thought appeared to be the incredibly complex functioning of the entire cortical network.

"But we got th' basic approach," Wyman said. "We figured how to proceed. Idea is, you don't need any special codes. Jus' need a one-one match. Kind of like languages. You can say same thing in English an' German, to th' extent diff'rent words mean same thing. They proved in neurophysiology section, brain can incorporate any digital code into own processes, long's there's unique correspondence. Nex' the math boys worked out a bunch o' theorems. You see, new data made the whole problem one o' conformal mapping. Topological. You see? Once we had those theorems in our hot li'l fists, why, away we go. R and D. Develop right kind o' computer an' right kind programmin'—not easy, take effort, staff, sev'ral years' work—but we know damn well we can do it. An' do you know what success'd mean?"

Bailey nodded eagerly. He was feeling better minute by minute. Intoxicated though Wyman was, he talked the language of science. And to hear that, after the past lost years, was like homecoming. Bailey's discipline had been sociology, but it too was pretty well mathematized these days, and—

And the man-computer system had fantastic potentialities. In effect, the machine's immense store of data, memory-scanning rate, ability to perform logical operations in microseconds, would be added to—integrated with—the human's creativity and conation. During their linkage, the two would be one, a continuously self-programming calculator, a mind so powerful that IQ had no meaning. They/he/it would, for the first time in intellectual history, consider the totality of a problem.

Certain obvious dangers must be guarded against, and no doubt less obvious ones would manifest themselves as work progressed. But the ultimate rewards seemed worth any risk.

"Well, we're not gonna do it." Wyman sagged above his glass. "No funds 'vailable. Got final word yestiddy. So now I'm busy gettin' stonkered."

"Why not funds?" Bailey asked. "I should think NSF would bury any such proposal under a truckload of gigabucks."

"Huh? Where you been, pal? Time past when NSF had money t' hand out. Nor NIH. We applied to 'em both. To ever'body in

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sight. Nope. Mental health too 'spensive. Otherwise government can barely keep a few existin' programs goin'. Defense—think Defense'd be in'ested, wouldn' you?—well, hell, yes, sure they're *int*'rested, but you know what shape they're in. Air Force takin' payin' passengers, USS *Puerto Rico* on the high seas as a floatin' casino . . . jus' so the services can finance a nickel's worth o' defense. Tha's why we backed down on the Guyana issue last year. Oh, the President tried t' save face, yattered 'bout 'honorable settlement without military pressure' . . . but damn it, whole world knows there was military pressure—on us—by *Venezuela*, f' Chris' sake!"

A tear dropped into Wyman's drink. "Damn that man," he mumbled. "Damn him to the smoggies' pit in Hell. Damn him till half pas' eternity. He's the one ruined us. I bet the French government put 'im up to it. I bet any 'mount you like, he wrote his books an' made his speeches on purpose."

"Who are you talking about?" Bailey inquired.

"You know. The professor. The Frenchman. Can't p'rnounce's goddamn name. One with th' ideas 'bout preservin' the nuts."

"Wait a minute." Bailey stiffened in his chair. His skin prickled. "You don't mean Michel Chanson d'Oiseau?"

"Tha's uh man. Tha's uh man. Shansong Dwahso. Bet he was really a Chinese agent, name like that. He knew this big, sloppy, soft-hearted, fat-headed country 'ud go for his ideas—go overboard for'm—fall overboard, into a sea o' manure—He's the one ruined us. Ruined my projec'. Ruined my country. Now we can't do damn thing but support buncha worthless crackpated bums." Wyman raised his glass. "Destruction to Shansong Dwahso!"

"No." Bailey rose. His chair clattered to the floor.

"Huh?" Wyman blinked at him.

I shouldn't let myself get angry, Bailey knew. *I'm not well yet. They told me I must be careful, not get excited, always keep my emotions under control, till my nerves have grown much steadier.* But the rage mounted nevertheless, chilling, nauseating, shaking him. He said harshly, "For your information, I am one of those worthless crackpated bums."

"Uh? You?"

"Don't believe me?" Bailey drew his wallet out of his pants. (He had said they really needn't issue him so good a suit, but they told him that morale was important to his recovery.) He flipped it open to the card that certified him as mentally ill. "I was discharged this morning, after five years in Napa State Hospital," he said. "Before I took sick, I was a

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useful member of society. But then I went through such a nightmare as you in your smugness can't begin to imagine. They saved me at Napa. They couldn't have been more kind. As well as their knowledge permitted, they patched my mind together again. I'm on an outpatient basis now. When I'm fully cured, as I hope eventually I will be, I'll go back to work. And I'll gladly pay my share of the tax bill for helping those who aren't well."

"Bu-but—" Wyman tried to talk. Bailey trampled over him:

"What would you have the country do? In the past twenty years, the rate of mental illness has grown almost exponentially. You have to do something. What's your choice? Kill us? Brainscrub us? Exile us? Leave us to starve? Those are all possible policies. But I, along with a good many million fellow human beings, I say thank God that Chanson d'Oiseau showed us the decent way to handle the problem—and I say to hell with you!"

He dashed the contents of his glass in Wyman's face.

"Bartender!" Wyman screamed. "You see what he did? You see what this suck-the-public-tit psycho did uh me?"

"Watch your language," the bartender replied. "He's certified, isn't he? So the law says we gotta make allowances."

"It does?" Bailey exclaimed. Delighted, he emptied Wyman's glass over Wyman's head.

"Hey," the bartender said. "Have a heart, buddy. I got to clean up the mess."

Bailey turned on his heel and strode out.

Sunlight fell brilliant on the street from a cloudless sky full of wind and gulls. Bailey tried to ignore its illumination of the shabbiness of once proud buildings, dirty sidewalks, drab display windows, scanty traffic, ill-clad pedestrians. The cost was certainly great, but the obligation must be met. As Chanson d'Oiseau had written—Bailey savored the noble, often-read passage in his mind, and turned it to English while he walked—

"Having shown in the foregoing chapters that epidemic madness arises from a situation that man has created collectively (through overpopulation, overmechanization, regimentation, depersonalization, everything against which the deepest instincts of the human animal revolt), I now consider what must be done about these revolting human animals. Their numbers are, in truth, creating such a burden and a hazard that compassion for them tends to die. Yet their condition, it is due not to any fault of their own, but to a massive failure of society. Hence one must find a social cure for this social disease.

"The solution that I shall pro-

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pose and develop in detail is of the most radical. But what does 'radical' mean? The word comes from the Latin *radix,* meaning racine—meaning root, and thus radical proposals are those which go to the root of the matter.

"Obviously, clinical services must be provided free, to the maximum extent required in every individual case. But psychiatry is imperfect. There are few or no absolute cures. The patient who verges on instability, or who has regained a measure of stability after institutionalization, he should not be subjected ever to the same intolerable pressures that brought on his illness. Rather, he must be freed from them. His whole task is to recover, or at least not to grow worse. Therefore he should receive a public stipend, adequate for the support of him and his dependents at a decent standard of living. And, as long as his behavior does not constitute an outright menace to others, he should be free of legal restrictions, permitted to work off his impulses in any way that it has necessity—"

Brakes screamed. A car skidded to a halt. White-faced, the driver leaned out and yelled, "Why'n'cha watch where you're going, you crazy nut?"

"Oh." Bailey came to himself with a shock and realized that he stood in the middle of Post Street, the light against him. "I—"

Cars stopped perforce around the tableau and honked. A crowd gathered. A large blue policeman pushed through. "Awright, awright," he said, "what's going on?" He assessed the circumstances. "Jaywalking, huh? You wanna get killed, Mac?"

"I—I—" Fear, irrational but terribly real, closed fingers around Bailey's throat.

"Give him a ticket, officer," the driver demanded. "Haul him off right now. He's a menace to radiator grilles."

Toot! Toot! Toot! "Judas priest," the policeman groaned, "we'll get traffic snarled from here to Daly City account of you. Come over here! Off the street! Lessee your—" But Bailey had already offered his wallet.

The policeman's jaw dropped. "Why the hell didn't you say so right off?" he exclaimed. The car was starting again. He ran and whistled it to a halt. "You, there! Pull over! Don't you know you damn near killed an unfortunate?"

The driver blanched afresh. "Yes," said a voice in the crowd, "and abused him too. Called him a crazy nut."

"For sure?" the policeman asked.

"Yes, indeed." The speaker stepped forth. "I heard him myself, officer. Goodness knows what psychic damage that brute inflicted."

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Several witnesses added corroboration. The policeman said, "I'm sorry, Mr. Bailey, but I can't book him for felony abuse less'n you come down to the station and swear out a complaint. You want to do that?"

Bailey gulped and shook his head.

"Well, anyhow, I can summons him on a 666," the policeman said grimly. "And he'll appear before Judge Jeffreys. I'll see to that personal. Nobody gets away with abuse on my beat."

Bailey felt he ought to put in a word somewhere, but he was too shaken. Wanting only escape, he faded into the crowd, which made a way for him, and onto Union Square. Its grass was long overdue for mowing, and badly littered, but the flags still flew on their staffs—

Wait. Those were supposed to be American and Californian flags, weren't they? Not the Jolly Roger, and SPQR, and a Campbell tartan, and Friends United in Close Kinship, and—

The man who had been his first witness touched his arm. "May I be of service, dear boy?" he murmured. "You are evidently new to our fair city."

"Well, I . . . I've been in Napa," Bailey said.

"And now alone. How perfectly awful! You might have been simply days about finding your real sort." The man was small, neat, clean, educated of speech; in fact, no matter how closely Bailey looked, the sole remarkable thing about him was his strapless blue velvet evening gown. He shook hands, lingeringly, and said, "Call me Jules."

"Bailey. Douglas Bailey. I—uh—you too—an, uh, unfortunate?"

"But of course, delightful boy, but of course. You are so lucky that I happened to be here. Few of us come down to this area. Without a guide, you could have been stranded among absolute *tessies.*"

A man in a black uniform emerged from the throng, mounted a bench, and trumpeted: "Friends! My dear subhuman friends! Listen to me. This is a very vital message. You will note that I am of Caucasian stock. Well, friends, I have a surprise for you. I am something rather unique. I am a racist—a dedicated, fanatical racist—who maintains, and can scientifically prove, that his own race is inferior. The only true humans on earth, my friends, the main line of evolution, the masters of the future, are the lordly Melanesians."

Bailey and Jules wandered upwind. "But there do seem to be, well, individualistic types here," Bailey said.

"Oh, my poor innocent," replied Jules. "How can you count

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them? Don't be so naive. It's charming in you, but it is still naivete. Half the Union Square orators are sane. They merely indulge themselves, knowing that an overworked police force will seldom ask to see their certificates. And the other half—now really, darling, don't you agree that they are as bad as the tessies?"

"Tessies?"

Jules patted Bailey on the rear. "I see that I shall have to take you in hand. I shall truly have to. No, no, don't feel obligated. My pleasure. My, shall I say, soul-artistry. I shall introduce you to the people who matter. I shall inform you. I shall remold your personality. I shall, in a word, make you."

"What? Uh, hey, look here, I don't—"

Jules took Bailey's elbow and urged him along. "Tessies," he said, "are tesseracts. Four-dimensional squares. The stolidly, immovably sane. But I insist that these downtown psychoceramics, even the certified ones, are tessies themselves. They have the same preoccupations, society, success, display, no dimmest concept of inner space. Why, I heard one ranting about God once, and asked him if he had ever apprehended the infinite by simple contemplation of a Quaker Oats box, and he positively *spit!*" They crossed the street. "I shall take you straight to Genghiz's. I'm sure a party will be starting. It's that time of day. And he has the most delightful friends . . . Ah, here we are." Jules stopped at a Volkswagen. It was overparked, but evidently the U sticker on the windshield, or perhaps the flounces around the chassis, took care of that.

"You have a driver's license?" Bailey asked in his bewilderment.

Jules nodded. "It makes me very much in demand in my little circle. Not many of them are allowed to drive, you realize. Some wax positively furious about it. But I must agree, just between the two of us, dear, that society has some rights as against the unfortunate. Not many, but some. However, can you think of any reason why a homosexual should not drive?"

"What? But, uh, but—your case—"

Jules trilled merriment. "Oh, my love, how *did* they treat you in Napa? Were you never allowed newspapers? Newscasts? Why, it was *the* big issue of the last election. We were even divided among ourselves. The Mattachine Society said they had worked so hard to get us accepted as normal, if un-average citizens—poor dears. They were just unrealistic. The rewards of 'unfortunate' status are well worth the label. And it isn't supposed to be a stigma anyway, is it? Every candidate—I mean simply every

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candidate throughout the nation —who favored changing the law to declare us mental cases, was elected by an overwhelming majority. I had no idea there were so many of us. Now, do hippity-hop in, doll child, and let us be on our merry way."

Bailey climbed in, automatically, recognizing his own weakness but unable to do much about it. *Besides,* he thought, *I was at loose ends. This could be fun. I can always leave if it isn't. I hope.*

They drove west, over the hills, toward Haight-Ashbury. Jules pointed out the sights as they went. The Temple of Ishtar: "Well, I may have certain prejudices of my own, but I do think those satyriasis and nymphomania sufferers are a teensy bit vulgar, making a religion of it incorporated under the laws of the State of California, don't you? And so unnecessary." The marijuana haze in Hamilton Playground: "That litigation went to the Supreme Court. What may or may not certified parents do about the rearing of their children? The Court found that, under the Fourteenth Amendment, it was discriminatory to exercise official control over such families when no physical harm was being inflicted." The distant view of Oakland's blackened ruins: "So tragic. But I suppose, with the load they have, not to mention the demand for admissions far exceeding the available space, institutions must be forgiven for believing that an occasional arsonist has been cured." A gaggle of men and women, dressed in artistic paint designs and nothing else, posing for the cameras of a foreign-looking couple: "I believe those tourists are Russian. We get a great many Russians these days. They laugh and laugh. I wonder why."

When the car stopped, Bailey gulped and had half a mind to run. The street was lined with old houses whose glass was broken, doors sagging, shingles loose, frames unpainted and tottery. The sidewalks were ankle deep in rubbish. The next block was unpassable because two automobiles had locked horns there and never been removed; they were rusted hulks now, and a rat scuttled from one. Nobody else was about, except a mainliner happily injecting himself on a decayed front porch. The smell of garbage blew strong on a cold breeze, and shadows deepened between the lean walls. Someone, somewhere, was crowing, loud and with a horrible regularity.

Jules sensed Bailey's unease and patted his hand. "Don't worry," the little man said. "I know this may strike you as the least bit . . . sinister? But really, that handsome head of yours is quite safe here. It's merely that—well, the tessies have their own areas, but they can't monopolize the en-

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tire city, can they? This section has been turned over to the unfortunates, to do with exactly as they like. Because wasn't excessive conformity one reason they became ill?"

Bailey mustered his nerve and accompanied Jules to an Edwardian mansion, turreted, scaled, and three stories high, which had been subdivided into apartments. "Shouldn't we, uh, bring something?" he said. "If we're crashing a party . . . a bottle or a six-pack?"

Jules stamped his foot. "You *must* shake off those preoccupations!" he cried. "What could be duller than a 'party'?" He all but enunciated the quotation marks. "How do you organize fun? And as for beverages, if you really haven't the inner resources to get high by an act of will, why, they'll be around. You see, Genghiz Khan knows Hairless Joe."

"He does?"

Jules calmed down and explained: "We have an unfortunate who thinks he's Hairless Joe. Surely you remember your classics. Hairless Joe made liquors. Therefore anyone who thinks he is Hairless Joe must be allowed to make liquors. And licensing or taxing him would hurt his psyche. So the cost is negligible." He winked and dug a thumb in Bailey's ribs. "It wasn't easy to get that certification. Hairless Joe is the subtlest man I have ever met."

From a gloomy, cobwebby entrance hall, a flight of stairs led up to the sound of voices and what Bailey supposed was music. "Uh, who'd you say our host is?" he asked.

"Oh!" Jules smote his breast. "I am so glad you reminded me! It could have been simply dreadful if you didn't know you must humor his delusion. Be sure to call him Genghiz Khan. His name is . . . was really Ole Swenson, but we don't mention that. As long as you oblige him in a few reasonable ways—you know, kowtow when introduced, tremble in fear, inquire how his conquest of China is going—he's really a love. But otherwise, well, I must admit he can get terribly, terribly vicious."

"Violent?"

"Oh, no! Gracious, no!" Jules threw up his hands. "Where do you get these distorted impressions? I admit some of my friends are a little strange, but it isn't their fault, it's society's, and they are all, I am sure, such dear good people at bottom." He dropped his voice. "However, as for Genghiz, do be careful. If you don't treat him as the Emperor of All Men, he . . . he *sues* you. For psychic damage. He often wins, too."

Bailey moistened lips gone dry and creaked after Jules.

But once he got into the swing of it, the party turned out to be harmless. Indeed, he was reminded of student days in Berke-

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ley. The odd clothes, the rather grubby bodies, the earnest and somewhat pompous conversations, the necking in various corners of the rooms, which were painted black or hung with parachute cloth or otherwise decorated in the latest nonconformist mode, were very familiar. He remembered that this company were certified safe, able to cope with the world provided merely that the world paid their way. Like him.

The affair got larger and noisier as day slid into night. Volunteers took a collection—unlike other Bohemias, this one did not lack for cash—and brought back sandwich makings. Bailey stayed in the apartment, circulating, getting acquainted, talking, admitting that Jules had probably done him a favor. This was an interesting bash.

He did suffer occasional disillusionments. For example, a young man in a robe, hair to his waist, interrupted Bailey's discussion with a former professor of economics: "Hey, Phil, you hear about Tommy?"

"No, what?" replied the professor. He was a gentle, soft-spoken gray man who seemed more resigned to his own untidiness than rejoicing in it.

"He got busted," the young man said. "Cops caught him with his wife."

"Well, well." The professor shook his head. "I can't say I sympathize overly much. You know I never approved."

"Now come off that tessie kick of yours," the young man said. "We can't let the fuzz pull this kind of stuff. We got to do something."

"What's the trouble?" Bailey asked. By now, a glass of wine in his hand and another inside him, he felt almost bold.

"New chum?" the young man said. " 'S like so. Tommy got himself certified last year. Stubborn case of marital impotence."

"You mean it wasn't?"

"Hell, no. Tommy's the biggest stud on the West Coast. Like, he towers. But I guess word got to the fuzz. Imagine that! Snooping on a man's private life. What kind of police state are we getting, anyhow?"

"But a malingerer—" Bailey found he was addressing the back of the robe.

The professor smiled. "I'm afraid that that's become so common it's positively respectable in some circles," he said. "Our young friend makes no secret among his friends that his religious monomania is nothing but a way he has found to live without working."

"And you don't report him?"

"No, I regret to say I lack the courage to be a fink." The professor sighed. "My own breakdown was quite genuine. You try explaining modern American economic policies."

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—An hour or two later, Bailey stood on the fringes of a group which listened to a voluble Negro explain an idea:

"Man, I tell you, we can do it. All we need's the organization. If the fairies did it, why not the colored? Way back in Brown vs. Board of Education, the Supreme Court found how discrimination affects the psyche. Right? Right. And law or no law, we still got discrimination in this country. So why shouldn't we get a bill passed saying every black person's a mental case? Don't Whitey owe us that much?"

"Well," answered Genghiz Khan, "if the same thought could be applied to Mongols and Swedes —"

"Sure," said the Negro. "Why not? I was thinking we should get together with the Jews. But too many Jews got tessie hangups. So why not you instead? Log-rolling, they call it."

A red-haired girl tugged Bailey's sleeve, nodded toward the speaker, and whispered, "Now that's a marvelous irony. Ferd wants certification so bad he can taste it. You should hear him rave about how the black man ought to rise and kill every dirty white in the world. But he's never gotten past any examining board. The bastards always say he's not paranoiac, he's just expressing a political opinion. You see, down underneath he likes white people. He can't help it, he does. So now he's hatched this scheme that ought to get him certified as an individual. Only I'll bet it doesn't. I'll bet that inside ten years it'll be the law of the land."

—Toward midnight they started dancing. By that time, probably half the population of the district was crowded into the house, every one of its apartments, and spilling downstairs into the street. But they discovered they could hop to recorded bongo drums if they did so in unison.

Bailey's head ached. He felt a trifle dizzy. Too much alcohol, smoke, warmth, stale air, excitement, in his weakened condition. But he didn't want to leave. His inner disturbances were lost in a roseate glow. His loneliness was no more. This world-within-the-world accepted him. The red-haired girl had talked about her analysis, and talked and talked and talked. But she was nice-looking, and active as they sprang belly to belly, and he thought he could get her into bed later on. He danced.

The company danced. The floor boomed. The chandeliers rocked. Plaster fell. Window-panes shattered. *Rat-a-plan, rat-a-plan, para-diddle, flan, flan!* Hey, ha!

Until the entire dry-rotted, termite-infested building collapsed. Bailey had an instant to know

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that he and the roof were falling.

Then the rubble buried him and he was dead.

Death was a stormwind. It was as if he were blown, whirled, cast up and down and here we go again. But by concentrating his will, by resolutely ignoring things like thunder and lightning and octupuses, he could stay somewhat on a level course.

"Zero," God counted, "one, ten, eleven—"

Oh, shut up, he snarled.

What was happening to him? Would this succession of sticky endings go on forever? Had he died his real death and been consigned to Hell?

No. For what was the point of Hell if you couldn't remember what you were there for?

He focused himself on that one riddle. Who was he? Why was he? Not being so confused and frightened this time around, he discovered that he could recall his entire past in each of his lives. And up to a point they were the same. Ordinary boyhood, studies, travels, books, music, friends, marriage, divorce, other women, other hobbies, promising career as a young research sociologist attached to the University Medical Center in San Francisco, because he'd written his thesis on the problem posed by the rising incidence of mental illness and was now trying to find cause and cure in terms of his own science . . . The lives diverged several years ago, in 1984 as nearly as he could place it.

"One thousand, one thousand one, one thousand ten."

But which of the four was his real existence? Or were they all? No. Couldn't be. Nothing in their common past suggested that his psyche would ever disintegrate. And yet it had. Four times. So weren't those episodes the illusion, the not-so-merry-go-round that he had to get off?

How?

Well, how had he gotten on in the first place?

He didn't know! The "incarnations" camouflaged that last segment of his life. Ye gods and witches, was he doomed to repeat death in one lunatic world after the next, until at last he actually did go mad?

Think, he thought with growing desperation. Think hard. What is it you do that catapults you from here into a different pseudo-existence?

"One thousand one hundred eleven."

You consider where you were last. You see what was wrong with their way of handling the situation. You believe you see a better way. Then God says *click,* and you're in business at a new stand, and you find that it doesn't pay either.

For instance, take this last

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world. They did have the germ of an idea. Remove the pressures that make the weaker personalities buckle. Trouble is, society won't function without some measure of intolerance and compulsion.

At least, this one won't. Technological, city-dominated, rationalism-oriented society has to put strains on people, and maybe those strains will always be too brutal for some. But how about an altogether different culture? Not Noble Savages, of course, but —well, post-technological man, who uses machinery only for the hard, dull, dangerous tasks—who has otherwise rid his world of ugliness and overcomplexity, who's gone back to a nature made safe and clean, so that while satisfying his animal instincts he also cultivates his intellectual, spiritual, uniquely human capabilities—

Click. The womb of time was impregnated.

No! cried Douglas Bailey in horror. I didn't mean that!

He was too late.

FATE THE FIFTH

The area-maintenance robot had broken down beyond its capacity for self-repair. Bailey sent for an Engineer. The man couldn't come for several days. Bailey wasn't annoyed at keeping house in the meantime. In fact, he usually did his gardening himself. To cut and split wood, cook, make minor repairs on the plumbing and the sunpower unit, by hand, constituted a pleasant change of pace. It was a joy to work outdoors. These hills above the bay, on which he and the robot had raised the cabin, had never been more beautiful.

But no one man could patrol an entire region. And Bailey had no neighbors. (He wasn't a hermit by any means; he had simply withdrawn for a while from his community, in order that he might develop certain aspects of a philosophical idea.) If nothing else, fire was an omnipresent menace in the dry season. He couldn't risk that, when the forest was making such a promising comeback. Besides, he'd hate to see Sausalito ruined, whether by conflagration or neglect. The deserted town had a curious, melancholy charm for him.

Thus he activated his radiophone and called Fairfax. Avis Carmen, who directed cooperative activities this year, happened to take the message in person. "Why, certainly, Doug," she said. "You ought to have notified us earlier. I'll get you a crew in—Well, a lot of the boys went boating in the Delta, so we may not be able to spare enough here. But I can ask for volunteers from elsewhere. How many do you estimate we'll need? Twenty? Okay, we'll be at

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your place day after tomorrow at the latest."

"Thanks a lot, Avis," he said.

"Why, what's to thank for? It's our plain duty to the land. Besides, a joint job like that is fun."

"I've kept the habit of thanking people for kindness. Guess I'm old-fashioned."

"You are that, dear." Her voice got huskier. "Tell you what. I'll delegate the organizing to Jim Wyman, and come today by myself."

"Oh, that's not necessary. I'm not in any trouble yet."

"I know. But wouldn't you like a helping hand? And some companionship and sex? You've been alone for weeks."

Bailey hesitated. "To be quite honest, yes," he said. "I'm sufficiently worried that I can't maintain deep serenity. Which means I'm not accomplishing anything in the insight line anyhow. But can you leave on such short notice?"

Avis laughed. "Relax! You must try to overcome those geases. I swear, if the Change hadn't occurred, you'd eventually have fretted yourself into a nervous breakdown. It won't hurt a thing if I don't lead the folk dances and community sings and handicraft classes for a bit. My only vital obligation is the training in gentleness, and I'm sure Roger Breed will take charge of my six-year-olds while I'm gone. If you insist on being stuffy and self-righteous, I could say that my most urgent task is you. You sound as if loneliness has stimulated your aggressions."

"'Make love, not war,'" he quoted with a chuckle.

"Isn't that the basic principle of the modern world?" she replied soberly. "Not that you'd ever hurt anyone else, dear. But that means that any undischarged tensions are turned inward."

Bailey broke the connection as soon as decently possible: which wasn't very soon, given a canon of leisureliness and sociability. Avis Carmen talked too much, and was a little too bustlingly sincere, for his entire liking.

Nevertheless, he looked forward to her arrival.

That was in late afternoon. Being in a hurry, she didn't walk, bicycle, or ride horseback the fifteen or twenty miles. After making sure no one else needed it, she took one of the village's hovercars. The vehicle set down in a soft whirr outside the cabin. Bailey ran to meet it. Avis climbed forth. She was a big young woman, her blonde hair a startling, sun-bleached brightness against the tanned unclothed skin. When they embraced, she was warm and smooth and smelled of summer.

"Hey, big boy," she said, "are you in that urgent a case?"

He nuzzled the hollow between

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her neck and shoulder. "Now that you bring up the subject," he said, "yes."

"Well . . . all right. I've missed you too, Doug."

Afterward they stepped back outdoors to fetch her suitcase. But she halted, and whispered with shaken, unaffected reverence, "My God, have you got a view here!" and they opened their awarenesses and knew themselves one with the world.

The sun was westering behind the live oak and eucalyptus that crowned this ridge. From its great golden shield there streamed spears, which flamed where they struck. The cabin walls, the surrounding trees, the air itself were saturated with light. Ahead, the ground tumbled steeply, down into woods, until at last the bay shone blue, mile after calm mile to the tawny eastern hills. Southward lay San Francisco, towers lifting elfin out of luminous mists. Silence brimmed the sky.

Bailey was the first to return to his isolated self. He saw tears on Avis' face and said, "But what's wrong?"

She came back slowly, with some reluctance, from her communion. "Nothing," she answered him. "The loveliness. And the pity."

"Pity?"

"For everyone who lived before the Change. Who never knew this."

"Now, now, we weren't that miserable, sweetheart. And why make me feel ancient? You were born in the prior civilization too."

"I don't remember much, though," she said gravely. "I suppose the . . . the judgment time made such an impression on me that I forgot a great deal of childhood. Same thing for nearly all the survivors. You seem to recall the old days better than most. The rest of us, well, you might say the judgment scrubbed us clean."

He guessed that she wanted to expel whatever sorrow had brushed her, for she went on almost fiercely: "It had to be. We had to be shaken loose from the ways of our fathers. Then we saw what the unnaturalness, the compulsions, the dirty little inhibitions, had done to the earth and mankind. We were liberated from the past and really could start afresh."

"I'm not sure we're all that liberated," Bailey said.

"Oh, we've kept what was good." Avis glanced at San Francisco. "Take the city, for instance. It does add a magic to the scene. I'm glad it's there, glad the machines keep it up, glad children get taken on visits as part of their education. But live there?" She grimaced.

"I liked it," Bailey said.

"You didn't know any better. Did you?"

"N-n-no." His memories de-

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manded release. "But I had friends. They died. Everyone I knew died. What's the estimate? The plague killed ninety-five percent? Of the whole world's population—in months! Even you have to weep for them once in a while."

"For their poor, wasted lives," Avis said. "Not their deaths. Death was a release, I'm sure. And what other way was there out of the trap man had built around himself? Now we have room to breathe, and the wealth and resources and knowledge to do anything we like, and we're turning our planet into paradise."

"Are we?" Bailey wondered. "We know the Bay Area. We make occasional radio contact with a few other fragments, here and there around the world. But otherwise—okay, suppose you tell me what's happening as close to us as the Russian River."

"Probably nothing," Avis said. "No people. We'll expand and occupy the empty lands. But not in haste." Her fist thudded on the soil. "And we'll *never* breed, and build, and mine and log and pollute and destroy, in the old obscene fashion. Never! We've learned our lesson!"

Bailey decided the conversation had grown depressing and should be changed. He laid an arm around her waist. "You're a sweet girl," he said, as much to calm her as because he meant it. "If jealousy were permitted, I'd be jealous of your other lovers. Think you might like to be a parent with me?"

She eased her tautness, kissed his cheek and nestled close. "I'm young yet," she said. "Not ready to assume the ultimate responsibility. But someday . . . yes, Doug, if you still want, I think I'll want too. You must have very good chromosomes, and you'd play the father role well—and, aw, I'm fond of you."

Their talk wandered off into amiable nonsense until twilight and hunger drove them inside. After dinner, on a synthetic bearskin rug (although bears were coming back, so far the species was protected), before the flames that danced in a genuine stone fireplace, they made love again, to the accompaniment of Ravel's *Bolero* played on a rustic stereo hi-fi. That was such fun that they repeated with Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps,* and Bach's *Toccata and Fugue in D Minor,* and Beethoven's *Ninth,* and finally something by Delius. The modern way of life did wonders for that particular capability.

The next afternoon a dozen of their friends arrived from Fairfax with a carrier load of gear. Toward evening, a contingent from across the bay moored their yawl and hiked uphill. They were made welcome as new acquaintances always were. The total force

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was greater than needed or expected, because several girls had come along to help cook. But everyone carried food—venison, wild pork, smoked fish, dried fruit, nuts, raisins, honey, stone-ground bread—which went into the common stock. One man had thoughtfully added a case of Livermore wine. That night saw a great party. No one got drunk—you never got drunk in this culture—but they grew mellow, sang songs, danced, swapped partners, vied in athletic feats, extended invitations to come visit.

There followed two days of earnest effort. The men ranged widely on foot, checking potential trouble spots, clearing deadwood from firebreaks, eradicating poison oak, medicating for plant diseases, maintaining trails and roads, everything the robot had handled. At night, they were too tired to do more than eat and sleep. But the sense of comradeship and accomplishment was precious.

Finally the Engineer arrived. The sunpower unit was giving new trouble, so Bailey happened to be at the cabin with the women when the hovertruck descended from heaven. They bowed their heads respectfully as the tall, saffron-robed figure emerged, followed by his bell-ringing acolytes.

The Engineer lifted his slide rule. "Peace be upon you, my children," he intoned. "I pray you, lead me to the sufferer."

"Will you not take refreshment first, Doctor?" Avis asked.

The feather bonnet bobbed and swayed with head shaking. "My daughter is gracious. Later we will avail ourselves of her hospitality in the spirit in which it is proffered. But first we must, if naught else, inspect the robot. To the degree that anything, aye, even a machine, is not in harmony with itself, unto that degree are the world and the starry universe awry. All malfunction is evil, all evil is malfunction."

"The Doctor has instructed me, his chela," Avis said humbly.

Bailey led Engineer and acolytes to the shed where the robot was kept. They took off their robes, broke out their tools, and went quite matter-of-factly to work. Bailey watched. He had no further call on his services. Once the robot was fixed, it would repair everything better and quicker than he could.

"You must forgive the delay, my son," the Engineer said while he unscrewed a cover plate. "I have so many calls over so wide an area. Would that more people would enter the Profession."

"Well, it's a hard one," Bailey said. "I don't think the younger generation has incentive to undergo years of intensive training."

"You're probably right. Let's hope we succeed in instilling the true cooperative spirit."

"Uh, don't you think the Pro-

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fession could be made less difficult? If nothing else, couldn't the ceremonial duties be omitted? I'll bet you spent months learning the Mass of Matter, for instance."

Again the Engineer shook his grizzled head. "The spirit of the times requires it," he stated. "I suspect you remember pre-Change conditions quite well. So do I. We can both look at our present environment with some objectivity. Don't you agree, one of the best features about it is this rite, pageantry, desire to give a religious meaning to every act we perform? I think the spiritual barrenness of the old world was one reason the judgment destroyed it so thoroughly. What did most people have to live for? Lacking the will, they lacked resistance to the plague." He returned to his job. "Of course," he said, "that worked out for the best."

"What?"

"Why, sure. Without a really clean sweep, how could we have been free to develop as we have?"

The trouble with the robot was nothing serious, a burned-out circuit that was soon replaced. The Engineer did not stay longer than necessary for a cup of coffee and the briefest thanksgiving song. He was expected in too many other places.

When the men came back at dusk, they felt something more was needed. They must celebrate, not only the end of their work, but the fact that the land had escaped harm. It was agreed that next day they'd hike to Muir Woods.

That was a gorgeous tramp, sometimes along the crumbling road, sometimes straight across the huge, windy, poppy-flaming hills. They sang, talked, jested, laughed, or simply took joy in the sunshine and air that enveloped them. Bailey found himself most of the time walking beside Cynara. She was one of the Eastbay crew, a small, fine-boned, red-haired girl with the most magnificent large eyes he had ever seen. And he liked her conversation, too; she had a puckish humor that Avis lacked. Toward the end, she went hand in hand with him.

Having started early and being in top condition, the party reached their goal not long after noon. They meant to enter the great redwood grove and commune with its awesomeness. Later they'd have a picnic supper, spend some mirthful hours like their first night together, spread sleeping bags, and rest beneath the stars. In the morning they'd wend their separate homeward ways.

"But the first order of business is lunch," Cynara declared. Several others nodded agreement.

Avis frowned. "I don't know, my friends," she said. "We came here for sanctification."

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"Not on an empty stomach, please," Cynara answered.

Avis unbent. "Very well. I suppose holiness is a little difficult under those circumstances." She genuflected to the trees that rose sheer beyond the Custodian's house.

The sun gave benediction. The earth breathed incense. A lark chanted.

They opened their packs and built sandwiches ad libitum. Bailey and Cynara were thigh by thigh, resting their backs against a solitary oak, when Avis happened past. "Well, well," she smiled. "A developing relationship, hm?"

"Do you mind?" Bailey asked.

She rumpled both their heads. "Of course not, sillies."

Having eaten, the group laid prayer cloaks over what clothes they did or did not happen to wear and approached the grove. The Custodian emerged from his house. They knelt, the old man blessed them, they passed in under the silent, sun-flecked shadows.

Bailey's eyes kept straying from the cathedral archways that reached before him, to Cynara at his side. *Well,* he thought, *what's wrong with that? Even in today's religion. Especially in today's religion. What higher purpose does man have than to give and receive happiness, to care for the land and be cared for by it, and know that he is one with the cosmos?*

Oneness, yes, also with our fellow human beings. When I am with this girl, I will also somehow be with Avis; and when I am with Avis or any other I will also somehow be with Cynara, and thus we cannot ever be unkind or unfaithful. A tune lilted through Bailey's mind, something from old times, or had it been a poem, or both? He couldn't quite remember.

"But I'm always true to you, Cynara, in my fashion.

Yes, I'm always true to you, Cynara, in my way—"

A woman shrieked.

The noise went like a buzz saw in this hush. Bailey leaped backward. Cynara choked on her own scream. Their companions who had preceded them retreated, halted, stared out of eyes in which there was no belief.

All save one man. He sprawled on the path, face down, in a puddle of blood that was impossibly brilliant scarlet and that spread and spread and spread without end.

Above him grinned his killer. The creature was huge, burly, dressed in stinking skins. Through a greasy thicket of hair and beard could be seen the smallpox scars. A crude machete dripped in his hand.

Bailey reacted with an instinct he had not known remained to him. He grabbed Cynara, threw her and himself into the hollow

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that a fire had made in one vast bole, and stood before her with his hands crooked for battle.

Others loped into view, as filthy as the first. They howled and yelped in what might once have been English. A couple of Bay Area men bolted. One went down, his skull split by an ax blow. His comrade fell with a spear through him, lay there and ululated in agony. The killer laughed.

"Joe," Bailey whispered. "Sam. But they're my friends!"

Rage drove out terror. Never had he seen with such starkness, snuffed blood and sweat at such distances, felt each microscopic breath of air cold across his skin. His thoughts went in lightning flashes: *Those are savages. Must have come from the north. Survivors in those parts after all. People that really went back to nature.*

The pilgrims stood numb. The invaders encircled them. The two groups were about equal in numbers—no, the civilized men amounted yet to four or five more—and the girls were in good physical shape too—why didn't they fight? An athlete could get in under one of those clumsily handled swords, pikes, clubs . . . take it away from the enemy . . . or at least make the enemy pay!

Bailey had almost jumped forth to begin combat when Avis collected her wits, lifted both hands, and cried, "What is this? My fellow souls, my brothers, what are you doing?"

A northerner barked a command. His company got to work. One or two of the victims tried to run, but didn't get far. The slaughter of the men was over in seconds, though some would obviously take hours to die. Thereafter the gang seized the women.

"No!" Avis wailed. "Not with animals!"

She struggled until, impatiently, her attacker knocked her out with his fist. He broke her jaw. The other girls gave less trouble. While waiting their turn, a couple of northerners cut pieces off a dead man and ate them raw.

Cynara had fainted. *I've got to get her away,* Bailey thought in his nightmare. *Away from . . . this whole area? We've forgotten how to fight. We've no weapons, no training, no will even to defend ourselves. And now the savages have discovered us. They'll swarm in, killing, raping, enslaving, looting, burning. It was a mistake to believe we'd succeeded in making history stop.*

But no. I can't desert my people.

Maybe, just maybe he and she would be overlooked in this hollow, until the invaders and their captured women—if they didn't simply murder the girls—had gone away. Maybe he and she could flee across the land, carrying their

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warning, somehow rally their gentle folk before it was too late.

They might perhaps have done so. They might conceivably have become the leaders of a civilization that would apply scientific method to the perfection of war, exterminate the enemy, and proceed on momentum to conquer a good-sized empire. But Cynara woke, and moaned, precisely as a few woods-runners passed by on their way to the Custodian's house. They called the rest.

Had he been armed, Bailey might have held the entrance to his refuge for a while. But the first spear thrust in his shoulder convinced him that he needed room to operate, if he wasn't helplessly to be butchered. He charged forth and did manage to acquire an ax. With much satisfaction, he killed its owner and backed toward his tree. But the northerners were already behind him.

Then a club spattered his brains and he was dead.

Death was a stormwind. No, wait, this wasn't death, wasn't chaos, was merely the senselessness of total sensory deprivation.

"Zero," God counted, "one, ten, eleven—"

Oh, come off it, Bailey growled. Do You think I don't recognize binary digits?

That was the worst world so far, his thoughts continued. And not because of the cannibals, either. They were only poor and ignorant. But the civilized people, who never bothered to find out what was going on beyond their little bailiwick, who blandly accepted the deaths of I don't know how many human creatures as a reasonable price for their own superior culture—ugh!

Hey, now. What do I mean, "so far"? I want out, not further in,

I should be able to find the way. I'd better be able to. Otherwise, good-bye, sanity.

"—one hundred, one hundred one, one hundred ten—"

Or in Arabic, four, five, six, et cetera. That's a computer. My nerves detect its impulses while it's on stand-by. This indicates that somehow I'm coupled to it. When the thing goes into action —yes, the Simulator.

The man-machine system. I the man, it the machine. Together we consider a problem in totality.

What problem?

Well, I'm a sociologist, working on the cause and cure of mental illness. Many kinds of solutions are being proposed . . . I remember talk of voluntary euthanasia . . . But oftentimes in the past, remedies proved worse than troubles. Consider the long-range effect of bread and circuses on the Roman proletariat; consider most revolutions and attempted utopias. We need a way to improve in a less blind, trial-

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and-error fashion. And it's not enough to devise a theoretically workable system. We have to know beforehand how it'll feel in action, to those it acts on. For instance, a dole might make good economic sense under some circumstances, but might demoralize the recipients. How can you test a social reform in advance, from the inside?

Why, sure. The man-machine linkage. The human component supplies more than a general directive. He furnishes his entire conscious-unconscious-visceral-genetic understanding of what it is to be human. This goes into the data banks, along with every other piece of information the machine already has. Then, as one unit, brain and computer assume a social change and deduce the consequences. Since the objective is to explore those consequences from an immediate, emotional standpoint, the result of the logic is presented as a "dream."

Perhaps the machine is a bit too literal-minded.

Be that as it may . . . clearly, if an imaginary world turns out to be undesirable, there's no point in exploring it further. The system must allow me to order that sequence broken off. Sort of like the way a person can tell himself to awake from a bad dream.

Only in this case, for some damn depth-psychological reason, the signal for switch-off took the form of my own realistically simulated death. And that shocked me into partial amnesia. Hence I didn't issue an unequivocal order to end the whole show. Hence the machine waited on stand-by, till my stream of semiconsciousness tossed up something that it could interpret as a command.

The mind shuddered. Christ! I could've gone on this way till—till—

Okay, Simulator. Take me home and stop operation.

Click?

You heard me, said Douglas Bailey.

Creation began.

O YE OF LITTLE FATE

He opened his eyes. Darkness lay upon them. He yelled and flung his arms about.

"I say, there, what's the matter? Wait a tick. I'm right here."

Douglas Bailey forced himself to lie quietly. His chest heaved and his pulse thuttered.

The induction helmet was pulled off his head. He looked into the blessed, familiar, British face of Michael Birdsong, his immediate superior, and at the wonder of his own laboratory. The knowledge of deliverance went through him in a wave.

"Are you all right?" Birdsong asked. "Something go wrong?"

"I . . . I dunno." Bailey sat

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up on the couch, letting his legs hang down. He still trembled. "How long was I under?"

"I didn't clock you. But tell you in a minute." Birdsong punched a key. The instrument-studded board clicked and extruded a print-out. He tore the slip loose and read. " 'Bout five seconds."

"Huh? Oh, well." Struck with a sudden suspicion, Bailey said, "This is the real world, isn't it?"

"What? What? Indeed. What else? Unless you want to go the Bishop Berkeley route. But do tell me—"

"No, wait." Bailey waved a hand. "This is too important. I have my complete memory back, but it could be false. Let me check with yours. That might provide a clue. What's the status of the mental epidemic?"

Birdsong considered him narrowly before saying, "Well, as you wish. It's following the usual yeast-cell growth law. Starting to level off, y' know. Thus we should in time be able to commence large-scale treatment and cure. Meanwhile we're dealing with the victims one way or another, best's we can improvise. This program of yours and mine is aimed at finding a quicker, more basic answer." Eagerness burst forth. "Did you?"

"I don't know." Bailey slid his legs down till he stood erect, walked to the window and looked out across the city and the bay. "We'll have to evaluate my data, and probably collect more, after we've installed a safety factor I've discovered we need. But later, later." He laughed, with a slight lingering hysteria. "Right now, I'm content to know there are no basic answers—that we're muddling along, in our slow, left-handed, wasteful, piecemeal, unimaginative human fashion—that, by God, I *am* back in the real world!"

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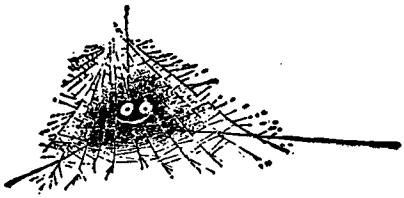

The Dark Corner

Taking a sort of Baker Street Irregular tack, Sam Moskowitz has lovingly put together an anthology based on the personality and glamor of Edgar Allen Poe (THE MAN WHO CALLED HIMSELF POE, Doubleday, $4.95), and it's a grand night's entertainment. The book includes a number of short stories featuring Poe as a character, one featuring him as several characters, a little group of poems written to him or his memory, a tale begun by him and completed by another, and a mysterious piece of work which may or may not (don't look at me!) have been written by the master himself. One very interesting inclusion is a story by a man who lays claim to have been one of Poe's friends back in the good old days at Virginia U. According to this fellow, a Douglass Sherley, Poe used to drink great quantities of a noxious-sounding brew called *peaches and honey* (italics Mr. Sherley's), gamble at cards for the sake of gold and silver coin, and walk about burdened with the appalling nickname "Gaffy." This last touch has a convincingly horrible air of reality about it which persuades me Sherley's allegations are not to be lightly dismissed. There is, near the end of the book, a poem written to Poe by his dying wife, Virginia Elizabeth, on the occasion of St. Valentine's Day. It is one of the worst poems I ever saw printed, and one of the most heartbreaking.

THE CELL: THREE TALES OF HORROR (Hill and Wang, $5.00) is the first collection of David Case's work to be published. The lead story, "The Cell," is the best of the lot, I think. It's either the account of a homicidal psychopath's slow disintegration, or one of an advancing case of

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lycanthropy. Mr. Case never says for sure, and he plays enjoyably with the ambiguity. The story is, perhaps, a little too extended, but it has a genuinely gruesome mood throughout, and the ghoulish implications of what may be in the cell, even now, are satisfyingly spooky. A second story, "The Hunter," comes very close to successfully pulling off the kind of man-against-nature sort of thing that Algernon Blackwood used to do so well; and the third, "The Dead End," also has a very good Blackwoodian flavor to it and makes excellent use of an exotic locale. THE CELL indicates that David Case is an author who deserves to be closely watched.

The bulk of the authors represented in SPLINTERS: A NEW ANTHOLOGY OF MACABRE MODERN FICTION (Walker and Company, $5.95) certainly seem to have it in for the ladies. Offhand I cannot think of any other collection wherein the fair sex is so enthusiastically chastised and maltreated. There's hardly a full-grown woman in the book who escapes punishment, and most of them are clearly shown to be the sort who've earned their drubbing well. The book starts out with a story concerning a female which is literally a snake, goes on to a mass murderess, trips from there to a deadly rivalry between a nagging wife and a lady orchid (the author sort of passes over the fact that every lady orchid is also a gentleman orchid), and concerns itself elsewhere with a vicious dead wife who destroys her husband's second marriage, a vicious living wife who destroys her family by sealing them off from the world, a cruel teacher who bullies the wrong ugly little boy, and an unfortunate woman who is possessed by an extremely nasty demon. Even when the girls are trying to behave, and I think that last one was trying to behave, they get it from the fellows, you bet. Heads bashed in, burnt for witches, shamefully treated by gigolos, and one poor creature is even violated on her slab in the morgue. Of course there are some stories not concerned with killing or being killed by females (three), but two of these have subtle implications, if you're disposed to look for them, and after the rest of the collection, you're disposed to look for them. I have not mentioned until now that the book contains some really excellent stories, nor that I think anyone interested in the macabre would enjoy reading it, and I do so now. I highly recommend it. But they really ought to bring out a sequel where the lads get it in the neck.

Out of consideration for those who have enjoyed the exploits of Blackwood's John Silence or

(*continued on page 112*)

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Dennis Etchison is a young west coast writer who was published in F&SF several years ago (A NICE SHADY PLACE, August 1964; A WALK IN THE WET, February 1967). Mr. Etchison has been writing screenplays more recently, and it is a pleasure to have him back in our pages. His latest is a contemporary horror story that concerns, among other things, one of the images of death, and it is a chilling experience.

THE NIGHT OF THE EYE

by Dennis Etchison

THE PASADENA FREEWAY WINDS long and tortuously around the edges of the night. That particular night in July he found the driving autonomic and restful, as nearly as that is possible in greater Los Angeles' labyrinthine master plan of madness.

He secured his satisfied and tired hands around the greasy steering wheel of the old Ford and tipped his head far back, feeling unconsciously for a headrest, like the one in the pin-striped Camaro that had just passed him in a flurry of bravado. His neck, held in place too long on the rim of concentration, longed for one, as his back longed for a firm bed, as his fingers, joints cracking with every move and the sound felt but not heard through the now numb flesh, longed for the feeling of warm water, and lots of it, after the paint thinner and the pumice soap.

At his back, stacked behind the seat in closed-file fashion, were wedged the fourteen stretched canvases. They wavered and whispered like drying leaves with each turn, acting as partitions separating Manson from the long night running out behind him in what seemed like endless washes of raw umber, burnt umber and deep ivory black.

He felt his neck begin to throb

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as he fed the Ford more gas for the turn after Avenue 52. The car in front of him flared red taillights at the last possible instant, and Manson knew it was a woman. You had to accelerate into a turn, not brake, and that was one more detail Camalla had not, did not, would not, and most probably *could* not absorb and make functional for herself when he put her behind the wheel. In a profound but passing fit of cynicism, he asked the Lord, or whoever his invisible listening post was on these long drives back, why he had married Camalla at all. Why not simply have lived with her, shacked up, played the Mr. and Mrs. bit, *made the scene* long enough to have seen the little iotas of unlivability crawl out in to the daylight in all their nerve-wracking blissfulness—the way it had been with the others? Why take Cam any deeper into the nightmare with him than Jane or Melissa or that one with the translucent skin and the hair down to her waist, the one who never spoke but uttered musical notes in some scale beyond chromaticism whenever he got going about the differences between painting and making a picture?—and he couldn't even remember that one's name at this particular time. This night, however, the lectures were all played out, rendered useless by the canvases of these last twelve-and-a-half hours. Talk was cheap, he thought, a man's life long; and a picture, one that cut through the half-light as straight as a sharpened palette knife, was short, just short enough to compress the truth and give the lie to the rest, to all of it, to everything.

The lights from the oncoming lanes fired between the dividers like machine-burst flash bulbs, and he made a point again not to look straight into them as the freeway laced left and then hard right again. That was when he noticed that the black-and-silver car one lane over was pacing him.

He didn't pay much attention to it. He just locked his foot at a steady level and rode the edge of the line, taking the turns mindlessly as they came. As they had come up a thousand other nights on the way from the studio.

Stars limned the sky, and a bit of a wind, suddenly cool on the late and virtually abandoned northbound freeway, slipped in through the side vent and wrapped itself around his ankles.

The pacing car continued to roll on at an unchanging speed. The front wheels lagged slightly behind the Ford's, far enough back so that Manson would not be able to see who was driving without twisting his head far to the right, or slowing down himself.

The Avenue 60 turnoff swept up and past, and Manson knew he was almost home.

It had been a long day, and a

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timeless night, and his mind was still on fire, but the rest of him was tired to the marrow. And he wanted to be home—right now.

Avenue 64 was coming up.

The sign reminded: *¾ mi.* He released a breath held too long and spread his cramped fingers, staying the wheel for the moment with his thumbs.

He let off on the gas and slowed down just to be safe, though not to the speed commanded by the Highway Patrol on this upcoming narrow, uncertain section. He never had to.

Meanwhile the part of his mind that paid attention to such matters told him the other car was no longer there.

Because there was no sound on the freeway but that of his car.

He let his head turn an inch or two. He did not really give a damn, but—

The other car was there.

. . . Eyes back to the road; about another ½ mile to go. Squeezed lanes and dangerously rolling curves, built too long ago . . .

But there was the sound of no other car on the freeway.

Yet the other car was there.

What the hell?

He angled for a look at the other driver's face. It was probably some kid in a new kind of souped-up car, cruising the late night looking for a race. The kid wanted to race, was that it?

He looked over.

The black-and-silver car pulled even with him.

He could almost catch the face behind the window. The shadows obscured it.

Manson glanced up at the empty freeway, then back at the car.

The dark car veered unexpectedly toward him. The left tires wove across the line, then fell back. Manson looked up again. Now he was getting bugged. He started to hit the horn.

Then he glimpsed the other driver. Then he wished he hadn't. *The face*—and the rest. The man was moving his arm.

The man was trying to signal.

Manson glanced at the freeway, then back at the car.

Manson's hands tightened He felt the play go out of the wheel. He realized he was swerving.

AVENUE 64.

Then the light from the sign was sweeping over both windshields as they passed under it, throwing a fleeting illumination full on the other driver.

The man raised his arm, casting a shadow across the window.

He was trying to signal Manson again.

The light passed and was gone.

But it was too late. Manson had seen the face. *It was*—

And as it began to happen, Manson felt strangely detached, out of control.

The black-and-silver car knifed

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sharply in front of Manson. He braked the Ford in time, as he knew he would. But the right front brake was badly worn, and it chose this night and this instant to burn through completely, and lock.

The right side of the Ford jerked over and jackknifed back nearly full circle. The black car seemed to hesitate. Then the Ford, skidding free, was flying hopelessly toward the fence and the waving trees beyond.

Manson watched this happen.

But he had seen the man.

It was too late.

The man's face.

Behind him, the man raised his hand a third and final time.

But Manson had already seen.

It was like a—a—

The dark car pulled out swiftly and sped away, and was lost in the night.

As the Ford headed into oblivion.

And then time stood still, ran out, and stopped.

A gull flew over the sea wall.

Manson listened.

The voices from below the wall drifted up to him. He was waiting for the doctor and Cam to come and tell him if he would be able to leave the sanitarium today. The voices reached him in layers; for a while he would hear the children on the sands and the waves breaking over them; then he would catch a few words from his wife or Dr. Hallendorf, till a car passing over on the highway would drown them out; and then one of the sea birds would fly overhead, its call cutting clearly through it all.

"But I tell you he's . . ."

"What if . . ."

". . . forget it. No need . . . forget . . ."

Manson pressed a button and the spokes of his wheelchair flashed and hummed and he was moved forward. He came not quite to the edge and stopped.

The sandy grate of footsteps sounded on the stone stairs.

The tops of their heads bobbed visible above the wall as they came up to meet him.

"Why, hello, darling. I . . . we didn't realize you were still outside. I hope you haven't taken a chill."

"Well, well. How is the, eh, the Rembrandt, should I say? of the Sea Villa this morning?"

"Try Van Gogh, doctor. That suits his temperament a bit more, I'd say."

"Ah, but that fellow was mad, wasn't he? Not a very cheerful comparison."

"Was he?" Camalla brushed a renegade strand of hair from her expressionless face with long, thin fingers. "I've always loved the pictures he painted. You do look well, dear. Peter was right about the value of salt air. Are you feeling up to a little trip, per—"

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Mrs. Manson stopped when the doctor's eyes flicked over to her, preventing her from speaking out of turn.

The doctor moved closer.

"Well. Not such a bad day, is it, Manson? Or it won't be if the rest of this damned overcast ever burns away."

His wife and the doctor surrounded the chair.

Manson continued to stare out toward the beach. Far off on the sand, a man and his two children were making a mud castle. A breeze, weak but heavy with moisture, blew in across the sea wall; and though it had mussed his hair relentlessly all morning, he seemed not to take notice, even of the way it now pointed his hair in odd shapings that twisted like flames over his skull.

"Mrs. Manson, I think the time has come to be frank. I think your husband has made a—" The doctor, pretending to make a decision, hesitated for effect. "—A very nearly miraculous recovery. Yes, I think we might confidently say that."

The doctor stood proud. Manson looked up at him, at the florid cheeks. Then he looked back toward the ocean.

Mrs. Manson became almost visibly nervous. Almost. It was a strikingly uncommon variety of behavior for her.

". . . Something. I've just now remembered. In the car. Or is it back inside?" Her face transcribed a blanched smile as she went ahead smoothing her summer dress and soothing the goose pimples from her arms. "Just a sec. Forgive me?"

Then, with a physical awkwardness not nearly so rare for her, she moved to excuse herself.

Out on the sand, the man with the children had abandoned the mud castle. Now, with great apparent earnestness, he began digging down into the damp sand with his hands; soon the children joined in.

The doctor quickly affected conspiratorial tones.

"Manson, I'll tell you, I don't know how you managed it—I don't see it at all—but it looks like you've pulled it off, all right. I don't have to tell you how serious you were after the accident. You had practically every bone in your body broken. I don't like to be morose, but you know that, well, that they—the ambulance boys—actually gave you up for dead the first few minutes. You know that, do you?"

The breeze now produced a faint whistling through the silvered rays of the chair wheels.

"Of course I've kept as quiet as I can about the details in front of your wife. Lovely young woman."

He brightened.

"I'm not saying it's going to be easy. Not at all. You know me better than that." Manson didn't,

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but the doctor went on. "I'm glad to be able to break the news to you like this."

He paused. The breeze, now become a slight wind, whipped, lifted and flattened his lapels, so that they covered his chest up to the neck. "My boy, I think it's time for you to go home again. *Really* home."

Pause.

"Your wife informs me that she's already taken your old room at the Abbey San Encino. That *is* where you honeymooned, isn't it? I thought so. There you'll continue to regain your strength slowly, as you've been doing here—and so remarkably. And to get back to painting. It's gratifying to see that you've already begun again.

"I must say I don't know how to put this to you. God knows I'm no art critic. But, well, there is something that haunts me. About the sketches you've made here."

The doctor turned to the wall, laying his hands on the cold rail.

After some deliberation he said, "What would you say those —those flurries of black things in your drawings are supposed to represent?"

Manson noticed that the man on the beach, with the help of his children, had managed to dig a hole deep enough to stand in.

"They resemble knives, it seems to me," said the doctor, his voice weakening slightly for the first time. "Or wouldn't you say so?"

Abruptly, Cam's footsteps crunched on the stone.

She glanced from one to the other. Finally she said, "Hello. I'm back." The doctor smiled at her benevolently.

Then, throwing restraint to the wind, she said, "Did you tell him yet, doctor?"

When they were alone, Cam said, "Dammit, Will, what is this?"

She dropped a book in his lap.

"So you're keeping a journal. So good for you. But if you can do this, why in God's name can't you talk to me?"

Manson considered the yellow bound volume on his knees.

"Oh, I know what you're thinking. That I don't appreciate those precious deep, dark levels of yours. You're thinking, 'She's so shallow. She doesn't *understand* me.'" The next-to-last word she twisted into something beyond a curse. "Why don't you ever try giving? Just once in your life! I know, though. I know there's nothing wrong with your vocal cords. And that's not all I know now, my love. You see, I opened it." She waited. But Manson's eyes only strayed again to the beach. "I know what you put in there about me. Do you know how dirty, how *really filthy* your mind is?"

The man was now buried upright in sand to his neck.

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"I should have realized you'd go on being the ultimate egotist as long as you live. The doctor says that the old surroundings will be good for you. That's just it. Good for *you.*" She was actually starting to cry. "Oh, I know you. You'll get back to your work the minute we get there. You and your damned paintings. I saw the ones you've already started. You can hardly wait."

She blinked fast, biting her lip. "You don't have to tell me that those insane black markings mean something. You don't have to tell me that you think they do." She whirled. "I suppose you think you're Vincent now or something. Oh, I read *Lust for Life* too. I do read, you know."

Manson felt a stirring, a movement inside him. He studied her and repeated what she had said over and over to himself.

Suddenly her voice folded up. "Don't worry, mister." It was, as always, her last appeal. "I'll leave you alone to try to capture your damned movements on your damned canvases. As soon as I get you there. You won't have to spend even one night with me."

Manson's hands grappled with the armrests, tensing.

He took hold of the word she had said, *movements.* He studied and then felt around it gingerly, straining to know what it meant to him, struggling to remember.

His eyes narrowed and fixed beyond her, somewhere over the water.

This she mistook as a sign from him.

"I'll do that if you want me to, Will."

The children ran off down the sand to the edge of the water. The man, who was left helpless, buried with only his head above ground, shouted after them, but they were busy. They had found a stick which had been washed ashore. At first his call reached the sea wall, but soon the sound of the surf drowned him out. Then a flock of gulls circled and drifted down, and their cries rose sharply through the air.

"Oh, God! It's been so hard. And mostly on you. I should know that."

The children looked back at their father. They picked up the stick.

"Let me help, Will."

She knelt before him.

"I can try. Only there are some things I can't understand."

She rested her hand on the book.

"Some of the things you've written in here. All this business about your soul. What is it supposed to mean?" She searched his face.

His eyes were riveted on the beach.

"What's all the talk about, oh, leaving your body or something for a while after the accident? You

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wrote as if you believed it. Do you?"

He watched the children and the stick. And he watched the gulls bobbing about in circles. He watched the way they moved.

"If you haven't talked to Dr. Hallendorf about it, maybe you should. Don't you think so? Maybe some kind of psychiatrist would be even better. You know how I mean it. Don't you?"

He watched the way they moved.

"Will, I have to know. How serious were you?"

The answer to another, nameless question was starting to take form in some part of his mind.

Her voice wound up to a high pitch of intensity, like a violin string about to snap.

"I want to know, Will. I have to know. What did you mean? What happened that night?"

Manson began breathing heavily. He did not know why, not yet. His hands and wrists and arms braced against the wheelchair. He felt his heart pounding.

"I have to know!"

He saw the two children, the boy and the girl, running back. He saw them whispering, laughing. He saw the man's head shaking, his mouth moving.

"Tell me! Will! Tell me!"

The boy raised the stick high. Something sharp and metallic glittered in the end of it. The boy started to swing.

"Please!"

As it arced down, the birds scattered wildly. Their wings beat the air, and a shadow passed over the sand.

Manson fought his way up out of the chair. His eyes were wide.

The book slipped from his lap. It fell open on the sea wall, and the wind whipped the pages over to the last entry. It read:

October 13

Last night I woke up screaming. I knew the world was mine.

It was one of those things you see in the road, something dead and shapeless, something that has been run over so many times that it has lost all resemblance to anything living. It was one of those things you pass in the car on your way from somewhere going somewhere, and after you pass it you find that you have speeded up unaccountably, and suddenly you're hoping to get to where you need to be in a hurry, to be home safe before the idea can creep in and overtake you in such a way that you will never be able to get rid of it.

"What is it?"

She did not need to ask because the rest of the wreck was already coming into view.

They slowed around the turn and there were the trucks and cars with red lights banked along both sides of the freeway.

The collision had cut two cars

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into twice as many halves; glass covered the pavement like snow, and metal shapes lay rumpled in heaps as if they had been nothing more than tin foil a few moments before.

"Ugh. Let's not look at it."

She got past in a burst of speed. But as they pulled away from the carnage, the image of the first dead man's body in the roadway seemed to go with them, as it probably went with every car that passed the bloody scene.

And as Manson shifted, uneasy in the car seat, his eyes met the side-view mirror, and he saw that something else would be keeping pace with them as well. He saw a black-and-silver car pulling away from the site, following them.

She noticed Manson's eyes.

"You look tired. What is it you're watching?" She checked her mirror. "That car back there. Mmm. It is sort of odd, isn't it?" She shivered. It was getting on toward dark. The drive down from Santa Barbara had taken longer than expected. In fact, it had been interminable. "I saw it once before, a few miles back. He must have passed us. Looks sort of like what you'd call, oh, a Black Maria or something. I've never seen another car like it, have you?"

He had.

Manson rolled down the window. The cool air swept through Cam's car. She turned her head to him and started to say something, but thought better of it. Manson let the air blow numbingly over his face, blasting his eyelashes so that he had to half-close his eyes. Trees and shrubbery snapped by at the periphery of his vision.

They passed Avenue 52.

"It's not much farther now. You'll be home soon."

Yes, thought Manson. He felt the aches permeating his body, not from any kind of work but from the burden of waiting all these months, and he thought of what a relief it would be this time.

After half a minute he drew his head back inside. At first his ears rang from the wind, but that subsided and was replaced by a silence.

And not just silence, but A Silence.

And he knew the car had drawn even with them before he saw it. He knew it would be there.

He wondered how many others were being called today.

AVENUE 60.

"I guess this seems like we're going back to our house. I mean, it's the same turnoff to get to the Abbey, isn't it? It's been so long I can hardly remember. But then, you always drove me. It's been so long."

She was silent again. And through the silence, he knew that he was being watched.

He glanced at the other car.

"What is that man trying to do? Is he trying to crowd us off the freeway? Oh! he's ugly."

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Manson saw the hand moving behind the glass, a calm gesture never to be feared again. A phrase came to his mind: *the Flying Dutchman.* He tried to remember exactly what it meant, and wondered which car it applied to.

There was still enough light to make out the face at once this time.

Wait. Manson was not quite ready. Almost, but not quite. There was something he had been trying to recall for a long time.

He saw the driver's misshapen face. There was a particular detail which had bothered him, for he had never been quite able to name it: the eye, which appeared to be sliding off the unspeakable face, the deformed eye. *It was like a—a* —and he searched himself and tried to call up a way to describe it that would make some sense at last. He remembered the sorts of things it had reminded him of. *A—a*—but that was it, wasn't it? It reminded him of a *—a dead black crow's eye.* But what did that mean? But it didn't matter. In fact it may have meant nothing, nothing more than the images imprinted in dreams and left half-buried until the moments of recognition, or forever. He did not know what it meant, not really in any formal sense of knowing, and he still wanted vaguely to know, but there was no time and so he gave it up. There it was and there was no time any more, there was just no more time.

"What is he trying to do?!"

He is trying to signal, thought Manson, *you fool.* Almost idly he wondered if this time would be her time, too.

"Look at him! Look out . . ."

Shut up. Now, at last, the questions would end.

He could have told her to spin the wheel in the direction of the skid, when it came. He could have. But he knew she didn't know how to control the car on a curve to begin with. She never had.

It didn't matter now anyway.

She was babbling.

As their car started careening toward the steel and concrete center-divider, he parted his wind-dried lips.

"My loving God," he said, "you really don't understand, do you?" And the calm was almost upon him. "There's no more time." How long ago had there been? "It's too late now. *For anything.*"

Then she started screaming.

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Leo Kelley's last story here was COINS *(November 1968), a fine, offbeat post-holocaust story. His latest story also concerns holocaust, but only indirectly; its setting is off-Earth and it describes a chain of events that lead to a grim and inevitable ending on the shores of an alien sea.*

HARVEST

by Leo P. Kelley

"This is the Spacer Infinity *out from Earth calling Omega. Come in, please. This is the Spacer* Infinity *calling. Come in, Omega. We request landing data. Urgent. Over."*

His name was Daver and he stood listening in front of the crude Omegan monitoring-station with his face full of doubt and his ears full of disbelief. There was a ship invisible somewhere in the air above him. But no ship had ever come to Omega before. Daver's world, ever since Resettlement generations earlier, had gone its own off-limits way, a leper among planets, labeled forever unclean.

Daver considered switching off the monitor. But such an action was unthinkable! For generations before his birth, the monitor had been on open channel. For generations it had listened to the emptiness of the skies and the silent songs of the stars and had heard no kind nor cruel word from Earth—from home. His duty was clear. He must call the Council together as had been planned when the monitor was first built with precious electronic components but little hope. The Council must be summoned. It was his duty.

But Daver didn't move.

"Omega, come in, please. This

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is the Spacer Infinity *calling to request landing data. We are now in orbit around your planet and our fuel is dangerously low. If there is still life on Omega, we demand—we request the establishment of contact. Please submit necessary landing data at once. Over."*

Daver went to find Ilyaluana to tell her the news. He found her not far from the monitoring shack, walking along the beach. He stood for a moment in the shadow of a tall tree and stared at his wife as she moved in the light of the sun, an iridescent firefly undiminished by it. Her beauty, after all these years, remained new to him. Her beauty was a perennial surprise to him. He had never quite grown used to it, for which he was mightily glad. He called her name and the vowelized sound was a brief hymn in the quiet that was broken only by the murmuring of the ocean's tongue as it whispered wet secrets to the sand.

"Ilyaluana," he called, stepping out of the shadows and moving toward her.

She turned and her face glowed. She waved and waited for him to join her. When he was beside her, she touched his bare chest and said, "The children are still in the sea. Look. There they are!" She pointed out beyond the reef.

"I see them," he said. "Ilyaluana, a ship has come."

She studied his dark face with her equally dark eyes. "A ship?"

He looked up at the sky instead of answering. His upward glance was answer enough.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. I monitored it a moment ago. It is from Earth and it is called *Infinity*. Its crew has requested landing data."

"You gave it to them?"

He shook his head.

"Daver?"

"How could I? How can I?" He looked out to where his children were slipping easily through the waves. "I can't."

"But Daver, you must help them land. Without guidance their ship will incinerate in the upper atmosphere. You can guide it safely through the atmospheric warp."

"Ilyaluana," he sighed, "walk with me and let us talk about our ancestors and how they—"

"Daver, your duty—"

"Walk with me, Ilyaluana. Hear me."

They walked along the shoreline together, making flat patterns in the sand while Daver talked and Ilyaluana listened and their children piped to them and to one another in their melodic voices.

"Commander, I can't contact anyone down there. Perhaps the

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settlement has been abandoned."

"There is no place the Resettled could have gone," the commander said. "They were given no means to effect abandonment of the planet when Resettlement took place in the late twentieth century. No, they must still be there. That is to say, the surviving descendants of the orginal Resettled citizens must still be there. Try again."

The officer tried again and reported no response.

"It is inconceivable to me that they have perished," the commander bellowed. "Did you describe our status?"

The officer shook his head. "The information is classified."

"Well, man, unclassify it at once! This is an emergency! Once they understand—uh, our predicament—they'll respond. They've got to! We need their help or we'll all die. They just can't refuse to come to the aid of the last of their own kind, no matter what their previous crimes might have been."

Daver walked and talked while Ilyaluana remained silent. She knew the story he was telling, was in fact a part of it, and she knew also that he was telling it to himself, seeking a way out of what he considered to be the deadly dilemma that the ship's unexpected appearance in their sky had presented to him as Monitor.

"—and there were thousands of them," Daver said. "From all over Earth. All of them Resettled here and forgotten. Earth could have at least kept up contact with them—with us now. It would have been good, I imagine, especially in the early days, to hear voices from home."

"You hear them now, Daver," Ilyaluana said softly.

"Yes, I hear them now and I am afraid. In the beginning, had I been living then, I might not have been so afraid. But things and people change. Then I probably would have leaped for joy and welcomed them with open arms if only out of loneliness for my own kind. But now—"

"But now?"

"Now hundreds of years have passed. Our ancestors survived, Ilyaluana, and having survived they left us a legacy. That legacy is our lack of need for human beings. Our ancestors fought their way throughout their lives amid alien ways on an alien planet, and then they died and their children took up their standard, and then the fighting grew less and the learning and the loving greater. Now we walk together, you and I, along the beach and we hear the cries of our children—"

"We must think of our children," Ilyaluana said. "Children need to know about their roots. It is important."

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Daver knew that she was right, that it was so. He wished it were not so. "Come back to the shack with me," he said. "Perhaps they've gone."

But they had not.

"Infinity *calling Omega. Attention, please! Transmission of hitherto classified information follows. Earth and its inhabitants are dead as a result of a solar implosion. So are the residents of the planetary outposts. We are the only ship that escaped the holocaust. Our passenger list numbers two thousand and nine approved adults of whom seventy-two percent are females. All passengers are certified fertile and capable of extending and improving the human continuum under optimum genetic conditions as specified in the Bioengineering Indices. We request transmission of landing coordinates so that we may avoid incineration in your atmosphere. Specify location and latitude of atmospheric warp. As you know, all records concerning Omega were destroyed following Resettlement, therefore, landing cannot be safely effected without guidance. Our fuel is sufficient for only two Omegan orbits. Transmission of landing data urgently requested! Over.*"

Daver sent Ilyaluana to summon the elected members of the Council.

They came—the old and venerable, the young and daring.

Daver told them of the arrival of the ship called *Infinity* and the fact that it carried the survivors of the human race and that it had requested guidance in landing. As was the custom, the Council members spoke in turn.

First, the aged and nearly blind Garlo, who some claimed was a seer.

"Our ancestors longed for this day but are not here with us to share it," he began. "But we are here. We cannot refuse to transmit landing data because our refusal would mean the denial of a major part of our heritage."

The young and eager girl beside him whose name was Verona, said, "We would be refusing them the gift of life. It is not possible for us to refuse transmission of landing data."

Daver listened to each of them in turn, but the piping of his children echoed in his mind. He tried to remain objective and, more importantly, compassionate. But the fear that was a demon in his belly twisted his objectivity into terrible shapes and turned his impulse toward compassion into a burning anger born of a chilling fear.

When it came his turn to speak, he said, "I have brought to Council a copy of the encyclical, *Vita Sanctus,* dated 1992, in which the then Pope Clement

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spoke of the need for selective Resettlement, which took place in the year following the establishment of the internment camps. I quote: 'We speak from a heavy heart but speak we must, for the world groans in pain beneath the feet of her now nearly numberless children. Our heart is heavy as we concur with the judgment of our temporal leaders that many among us must needs be selected for enforced Resettlement far beyond the borders of Earth. But the facts are plain and true and not to be denied. Discordant seeds have been sown among us, and the world's leaders have agreed to pluck up the wicked crop whereever it may be found before it may flower and burst forth bearing evil fruit. It is written, *For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind.* We must be firm and dedicated farmers and learn to wield a necessary scythe so that the untainted among us may grow and prosper here on Earth and the—' " Daver stood up, unable to continue reading the quotation because of his growing fury. "I say it is enough! Their intent was clear, and the crew of the spacer now in our skies knows—!"

Garlo held up a hand. "I am Garlo, an Elder of the Council, and I would remind the Monitor that protocol, though it lies heavy on the head of one so young, must nonetheless be observed. If the Monitor wishes to speak, let him do so in temperance and sobriety."

Properly chastised, Daver swallowed and began once more to address the members of the Council. "They removed our ancestors from Earth as a shepherd removes the sheep wounded by wolves from his flock. They tore them out of society like weeds from a garden and abandoned them here on Omega to live—or perhaps to die. *To die!* And they did not once look back or shake their heads or *care!*"

"Monitor," Verona said calmly, addressing Daver, "it was all done psychogenetically, and they passed laws which allowed it. Earth was crushed under the weight of a burgeoning humanity. Our ancestors had rutted like sows and their progeny were everywhere."

"If they rejected our ancestors," Daver protested, "they will reject us too. And for much the same reasons. Look at us! They will consider us as much misfits as they did our ancestors."

"We are not revolutionaries as many of them were," Garlo reminded Daver. "We live peaceably now and in harmony."

"But—!"

"There are no longer any 'unacceptable' strains among us, as they felt there were then. They have either died out over the generations or have been eliminated from the genetic pool."

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"They will reject us," Daver insisted. "Or worse."

"They are our kind," Garlo said softly.

Daver denied the claim, but realized he could not argue with the Council members, who even now were voting in favor of assisting *Infinity* to land. The vote was nearly unanimous, only Daver and one other member dissenting. Daver knew his fears made his arguments weak—as weak as the young bodies of his only recently born brood that still frolicked in the sea outside. But he could not resist making one last comment. "You are old and wise, Garlo. You have seen many seasons come and go. But your eyes grow dim and I wonder do they darken your brain."

It was the insult incomparable and it defined the measure of Daver's anxiety. Garlo, in his wealth of years that had brought him a certain invulnerability to hotheadedness, chose to ignore the remark. So did the other Council members, following his discreet lead.

Daver tried one last time. "Let me speak to the commander of *Infinity*. And let the Council members attend to the transmission. There is more data required before action should be taken. There are questions. I want answers."

"Contact, Commander!" the officer shouted in the cabin of Infinity. *"Listen!"*

"This is Omega calling Infinity. *Omega calling* Infinity. *Over."*

"Infinity *here," the commander himself answered eagerly. "Transmit."*

"How many survivors do you carry?" Daver's voice was emotionless and cold.

The commander repeated the information that had been transmitted earlier.

"Will quarantine measures be required?" Daver asked, ignoring the shocked glances and disturbed mutterings of the Council members.

"No such measures will be required unless your cultural customs or religious rites require it. Every specimen aboard was selected with care to avoid gentic pollution during the time left to us before the solar implosion. The Bioengineering Indices gave us the names of only those who were suitable for a survival operation such as this. You need have no fears concerning their contaminant quotients."

"Quarantine might be warranted," Daver suggested, "from our point of view."

"We will, of course, accept any entry restrictions you choose to impose," the commander replied smoothly. "It is admittedly most important that the human species be preserved and propagated in

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the most desirable form and manner. However, we are aware of your heritage—"

"Then why did you choose Omega for your survival operation?" Daver asked angrily.

"Because it is the only planet offering optimum Earthlike conditions.-That was the reason for choosing Omega for Resettlement originally."

"You want to share the planet with us?"

"We want to settle on Omega."

"And you do not fear our contaminant quotient, as you phrase it?"

"We are requesting landing data," the commander said. "And there is little time remaining to us."

Daver turned smugly to Garlo and the others standing nearby. But his face fell as he saw a lack of comprehension painted on the countenances of those confronting him. Had they no ears? Had they not heard? Was history so soon forgotten in a desperate yearning for contact with one's own species? He tried to warn them, but they would not listen, so he ran from them toward the monitor, intending to smash it, but they seized him and force-fed him the yellow berries of the velapod tree, and he slept while they attended to the monitor and transmitted the necessary landing data to *Infinity*.

Daver and Ilyaluana, an hour later, sat by the edge of the sea, answering the cries of their children but talking little.

Daver occasionally looked up at the sky, relieved to see only birds there. Ten minutes passed. He got up and trotted to the shelter he shared with Ilyaluana and the children. When he returned, he was carrying a thick book with yellowed, cracked pages. He sat down again, his toes touching the froth of the waves that trickled up to them, his History resting in his lap.

Ilyaluana moved closer to him as he turned to the first page.

"My great-grandfather," he said, staring at the slick photograph in which the man lay imprisoned, smiling behind his thick beard. "And here, on the plain beside him," he said, touching another picture next to the first, "is my great-grandmother."

In silence then, he continued turning the pages. Faces of forebears, some grim and some grinning, looked up at him. Faces of girls in faded frocks appeared at first and then other pictures of other girls grown tough and wearing loin-cloths, their breasts bare. On an early page, men with pipes in their mouths and watch chains across their vests. On later pages, younger men with spears and painted faces.

"There are Doaks and Martin," Daver said when he reached the

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middle of the History. "They were typical of some of those Resettled."

Ilyaluana bent over and looked at the picture she had seen so many times. She looked at the two men embracing one another, their eyes laughing with joy as they posed in the midst of their fields where they grew a vegetable not unlike potatoes. In the distance was the womanless shelter they shared, and beneath their picture Daver had written words and numbers: *Sun Season, 2002.*

"You were happier as Historian," Ilyaluana whispered to Daver, putting her arms around him while keeping an eye on their children cavorting a hundred yards distant in the sea. "They never should have made you Monitor."

"Yes," Daver agreed, "I liked being Historian. I liked keeping the pictures and the records of births and deaths. It made me feel—established."

"Who is that?" Ilyaluana asked, although she knew. She wanted to hear Daver talk to her, to hear him tell of the past that had been a purgatory but which had become, over the years, a young Eden as a result of what Daver referred to as man's capacity to learn to love.

"That's Benjy," Daver replied, touching the black face in the picture Ilyaluana had indicated. "For a time, they say, he called himself the King of Spades. But then he had the good fortune to meet your great-aunt."

Ilyaluana laughed. "Of course. And he abdicated in favor of an all-consuming lust for her. I wish I'd known both of them. They say the mountain where they first met still smolders."

Daver glanced up uneasily at the sky, then turned another page. There it was—all the names and faces, the record of the years past, of joys shared, of tragedies endured—the carefully kept record of the aftermath of the Resettlement of Earth's outcasts—the politically "unsound," the homosexuals, the people of color, the feeble-minded, the psychotic, the "impure."

Ilyaluana looked up at the sky when she heard the roar and then looked quickly down again at the pages of Daver's History. "There we are," she said, pointing to the picture on the page at which Daver was staring.

Daver studied the picture of himself and a younger Ilyaluana which had been taken, he recalled on this very beach when they had first realized that they loved one another. "Call the children," he said harshly.

"The children," Ilyaluana repeated, looking out to sea. She telepathized a summons to them, and each of the five began to swim shoreward at once toward their waiting parents.

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A few minutes later, as they happily flopped their way up the beach, their gills inflating and their fingered flippers patting the sand, their father and mother stood up to watch *Infinity* set down on the nearby plain amidst a bright blaze of blue flame.

"We must hide ourselves," Daver said. He trotted away on his legs that were still vaguely human but four-toed and webbed, his History under his arm, toward the grove of berried velapod trees that began some distance from the shoreline.

Ilyaluana picked up the two smallest children and hurried after him, urging the other three on, pretending that their flight was another Sun Season game.

They hid themselves behind an outcropping of rock and watched as the commander and his crew filed out of the Spacer *Infinity*.

"What is he saying?" Daver asked Ilyaluana.

She telepathized contact with the commander in the way of the members of her species who were the original inhabitants of Omega, and reported, "He is sickened at the sight of Garlo's pelt although he recognizes that Garlo is partially human."

"And what of Garlo?" Daver asked anxiously, hoping.

Ilyaluana said, "Garlo is explaining how the original Resettled humans bred with us—with the Omegans."

"And the commander? What says he to that news?"

Ilyaluana shuddered and closed her eyes.

"Tell me." Daver shouted at her.

"He says, 'Christ! Oh, Christ! Just as we suspected—mongrelization!' He says—"

"No more!" Daver muttered as he buried his face against his wife's slicky pelted body, wishing he could weep but finding himself able only to curse.

"The commander is raising his arm," Ilyaluana whispered. "His men are raising their weapons! He is reciting from something—from something he calls the Bioengineering Indices. 'Purity of the human species must be maintained under all conditions by any and all means at the disposal of—' "

"Run!" Daver shouted at the sound of the first shots. He gathered up the children who piped delightedly, snugly held as they were in their father's fingered flippers. "To the sea where we may be safe!"

But the commander and his crew caught them on the beach. Ilyaluana was the first to fall. Daver and the children were shot immediately afterward. Daver's History fell when he did and lay beside him in the bloody sand beneath his broken left flipper, its last pages blank.

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THE FALLS OF TROY

article

by L. Sprague de Camp

IT WAS THE TENTH YEAR OF the Siege of Troy. Among the Achaians, fleet Achilles had quarreled with King Agamemnon, the leader, over a woman whom Achilles had captured on a raid. So Achilles sulked in his hut and refused to fight. Next day, the Trojan prince Paris (also called Alexandros), who had caused the war by stealing Helen, Agamemnon's sister-in-law, proposed that strife be ended by a single combat between himself and her husband Menelaos.

Menelaos was having the better of it when the goddess Aphrodite snatched Paris—a favorite of hers—away from the battlefield. Soon the armies were at it again, drenching the plain of Troy with the blood of heroes.

A few days later, the Trojans, led by Paris' brother Hector, drove the Achaians back to the wall they had built around their ships. While the sulky Achilles prepared to sail for home, his friend Patroklos borrowed his armor to go forth, pretending to be Achilles, and hearten the well-greaved Achaians. Patroklos saved the ships but was slain by Hector.

Now Achilles was roused to fight. His mother, the sea nymph Thetis, persuaded the divine smith Hephaistos to make a new suit of armor for her son. In his new armor, Achilles routed the Trojans and (with help from the goddess Athena) slew horse-taming Hector. He then staged a funeral for Patroklos, with a chariot race and other games. The gods persuaded him to let King Priamos ransom the body of Hector, which the Trojans cremated and buried.

Thus Homer's *Iliad,* a poem which in English runs to 150,000 words. The *Iliad* does not tell the whole story of the Trojan War—only one episode, the Wrath of Achilles, padded out with long speeches and minor incidents like the raid of Diomedes and Odysseus on the Trojan camp. There were once perhaps a dozen epics of the Trojan cycle, some attributed to Homer and some to other more or less legendary bards. Only two have come down complete: the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey.*

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The latter tells of Odysseus' ten-year homecoming voyage.

The rest are known only from fragments, but we have a good idea of their plots from the many later Greek and Roman poems, plays, and treatises based upon them. The whole story includes the elopement of Helen and Paris, the deaths of Achilles and Paris, the fall of Troy to the Wooden Horse, and the homecomings of other heroes like Agamemnon. The existing Trojan material contains many inconsistencies and contradictions, but that is to be expected.

In classical times, people assumed that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* had been composed by a blind poet named Homeros, who had wandered about the blue Aegean singing lays to the tune of his lyre sometime between the XIIth and the VIIth centuries B.C. Scholars computed dates for the Fall of Troy, the most respected being 1184 B.C., that of the Alexandrine savant Eratosthenes. In the last two centuries there has been much inconclusive argument as to whether "Homer" was really one man, or two, or a whole school of bards. Most Homerists now seem to think that there probably was a real Homer, who did the main work of composition about the VIIIth century B.C., but that many others, before and after him, had a hand in giving the epics the form they now have.

Until the XIXth century, all that men knew about Troy was based upon the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Few Westerners had visited the site in Asia Minor, since travel there was dangerous because of banditry and Turkish hostility. Some travelers thought that Troy had been on a low hill called Hisarlik; others located it on the higher peak of Balli Dag, four miles further south.

The man who brought the real Troy back into light was Heinrich Schliemann (1822-90). He was not, as some have said, the founder of archaeology. Before his time, men like Rich and Layard in Mesopotamia, Rhind and Mariette in Egypt, and John L. Stephens in Central America had explored and dug. But Schliemann was an outstanding and picturesque figure in early archaeology.

The son of a poor Lutheran pastor, Schliemann began his career as a grocer's apprentice, a bookkeeper, and cabin boy on a brig. When his ship was wrecked on the Dutch coast, he got a job in a counting house in Amsterdam. Already informed by a passion for Homer, he determined to make a fortune so that he could study these fascinating matters at leisure. For five years he lived a life of grim self-denial, indulging in no vices save tea with lots of sugar and studying languages. He eventually mastered seventeen besides his native German.

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In 1846, Schliemann went to Russia as an agent for a German import-export firm and eventually started his own business there. By application of superhuman intensity, a nose for business, and good luck, he was a multimillionaire by the time he retired at forty-two. During his Russian sojourn, he traveled the world and married a mercenary young Russian woman, who soon let him know she detested him. On his retirement he went to the United States, took American citizenship, and got a divorce.

In 1868 he went to Troyland. There he met the English brothers Calvert, one of whom owned part of the hill of Hisarlik. They helped him to start digging. With the help of a Greek Orthodox bishop whom he knew, he got another wife: a Greek girl less than half his age. Schliemann was not very attractive—a shabby, owlish little man with lank, thinning gray hair, a big nose, a droopy mustache, and a nervous, withdrawn manner. His personality was touchy, hot-tempered, boastful, and immensely egotistical. But, against all probabilities, his second marriage was happy.

The Troad is a peninsula 60 miles across at the northwest corner of Asia Minor. On the western side of this peninsula, Troyland forms a promontory. The plain of Troy is a gently rolling expanse, on which small trees grow scattered. The climate is hot and dry in summer, cold and wet in winter, and always windy and dusty.

Schliemann decided that Troy had been at Hisarlik, not at Balli Dag. For one thing, Achilles could not have chased Hector around the walls of a city at Balli Dag, because the slopes were too steep. In 1870 he began to dig. He ran into trouble when he started to dig up the part of Hisarlik that belonged, not to Frank Calvert, but to a couple of Turks. By arguing, wheedling, bribing, blustering, flattering, threatening, and sheer persistence, he got his way and went on digging.

In 1873, Schliemann found a cache of 41 large and thousands of small metal objects, of gold, silver, and copper. He had promised to give any precious finds to Savfet Pasha, the Turkish Minister of Public Instruction, who had secretly bought the tract to secure the treasure he thought Schliemann was hunting. But Schliemann, was quite as wily as the Turk. He smuggled the hoard away in his wife's shawl and took it to Greece. When he announced his discovery, the Turkish government got a judgment against him for 50,000 francs in the Greek courts. Schliemann not only paid the fine but utterly bewildered the Turks by giving them five times that amount for the Imperial Museum at Istanbul.

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Later, Schliemann dug at Mykenai, Agamemnon's capital, where he made more spectacular finds. The sites he worked on suffered from his hammer-and-tongs approach and from his passion for the Homeric Age. This passion led him to destroy valuable ruins of later ages in order to get at what he thought was the Homeric layer. But archaeology was still in its infancy, and today's meticulous stratigraphic methods had not been worked out. Moreover, Schliemann's techniques improved under the advice of his learned colleagues. By the end of his life he was less dogmatically sure that everything he dug up could be identified with some person, place, or object mentioned by Homer.

Schliemann found that Troy was not one city but a series, one atop the other. He identified seven, of which he thought the third from the bottom was Homer's Troy. After his death, his younger colleague Wilhelm Dorpfeld continued the excavations and concluded that the Homeric layer was much later and higher than Schliemann had thought. In the 1930s, an expedition from the University of Cincinnati, under Carl Blegen, reworked the site, cleaning up the older diggings and minutely studying the stratigraphy. The successive refinements of the stratigraphy of Troy are shown by this table:

Schliemann	*Dorpfeld*	*Blegen*
VII (classical)	IX (Roman) VIII (Greek)	IX (Hellenistic and Roman) VIII (Hellenic)
VI (Lydian)	VII	VIIb-2 VIIb-1 VIIa (Trojan?)
V	VI (Trojan) V	VI (Trojan?) V
IV	IV III	IV III
III (Trojan) II	II	II
I	I	I

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The story of Troy, as shown by these excavations, is as follows: About 2900 B.C. (these dates are all a bit uncertain) an unknown people settled on Hisarlik. On the hill they built a castle —probably of brick and timber— for the chief and his retainers, about 50 yards across, while the peasants dwelt in huts at the foot of the hill. These folk were hardly out of the Stone Age. Although they had some copper pins, needles, and knives, and mended broken pots with lead, most of their implements were of stone. They had no lamps, swords, or iron.

Around 2600 B.C., a fire destroyed Troy I. The people leveled the ruins and built a larger stronghold, 100 yards across. Things were looking up; wheel-made pottery appears, and Schliemann's treasure trove comes from this period. The wall had a gate consisting of a tunnel through a huge tower, 60 feet square.

The people of Troy II were among the world's sloppiest housekeepers. They floored their houses by spreading yellow clay and letting it dry. When the dwellers were wading ankle-deep in a litter of shells, bones, potsherds, and other rubbish, instead of cleaning house they spread a new layer of clay over the mess. When this reflooring raised the level until people bumped their heads on the ceiling, they took off the roof, raised the height of the walls, and put the roof back on. Such a squalid menage delights the modern archaeologists.

After another three centuries, another conflagration destroyed Troy II. This time the people either fled or were carried off as captives. After 2300 B.C., others occupied the site and built Troy III, smaller than Troy II and not following the original street plan. House walls were of rough construction, but some were of stone instead of the brick generally used before. Bronze began to appear. Householders began throwing their garbage and rubbish out into the street instead of letting it pile up indoors.

Troy III lasted a century or two; so did Troy IV, a larger version of the same. Troy V, founded about 1900 B.C., was still larger, with a substantial wall. Housekeeping was more orderly, bronze blades were common, and stone tools had become rare.

About 1800 B.C., the folk of Troy V gave way to a new people, who brought cremation and the horse. The citizens of Troy VI were almost surely the first wave of the great Aryan expansion. These peoples, starting out from the plains of eastern Europe, spread until they had carried their languages from Portugal to Assam. The horse, which these folk were the first to tame, gave the Aryans—otherwise mere cattle-

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raising nomads of undistinguished culture and uncertain race—an overwhelming, if temporary, advantage in war. Since there is no sign of a violent end to Troy V, it may have fallen bloodlessly. Perhaps the horsemen so terrified the inhabitants that they gave up without a fight.

Troy VI was the largest citadel yet, 220 yards across, surrounded by a thick wall of stone below and brick above, with four or more gates, each protected by a massive square tower. At first the gates were simple gaps in the wall; later, hinged valves were added. Streets were paved with stone slabs, which became much worn although there are no signs of wheel ruts.

Troy VI included one big, barrack-like stone building, 41 by 91 feet. The people used pottery of a type known as Gray Minyan Ware, also found at Mykenai. Although little precious metal has been recovered from this period, Troy VI seems to have flourished as a strong, prosperous center until 1300 B.C., when an earthquake overthrew the whole town.

The survivors dug themselves out and built Troy VIIa on the ruins, using stones salvaged from the houses of Troy VI. Although impoverished, the people were enterprising enough to pave a street, furnish it with an underground storm sewer, and make huge jars to store food in.

About 1260, Troy VIIa fell, apparently to a foe, who sacked and burned it. Skeletons have been found in awkward attitudes, as if people had been slain during the sack and left where they fell.

Then folk of the same kind built Troy VIIb-1. The houses were more complex, with more rooms. But they were set irregularly, leaving only narrow, crooked alleys between them.

About 1180 B.C., a new people seems to have taken control without violence and gradually transformed Troy VIIb-1 into Troy VIIb-2. The new folk used what is called Knobby Ware, and their cultural relationships seem to be with the Danube Valley and Central Europe. The fact that they gained control without damage suggests that they did so by some ruse or surprise, such as might have given rise to the legend of the Trojan Horse.

About 1100 B.C., Troy VIIb-2 was burned—either by accident or by another assailant—and abandoned. It remained deserted until the Greeks built a new town, Troy VIII, about 700 B.C. The new dwellers soon learned to exploit the tourist trade by exhibiting the tomb of Achilles, the lyre of Paris, and other fake antiquities. This city survived the turns of fortune until abandoned once and for all in the fourth century of the Christian Era.

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Although much has been learned about Troy in the last century, there is still no solid connection between the story of the *Iliad* and the other Trojan epics on one hand and the remains on Hisarlik on the other. Classical literature tells of two destructions of Troy: the best-known one, at the end of the ten-year Trojan War, and an earlier one. The latter tale avers that Apollo and Poseidon built the walls of Troy, but then King Laomedon refused to pay them. So they sent a sea monster to ravage the coast. An oracle told the king that it could be appeased only by yearly sacrificing a maiden to it. Herakles rescued Laomedon's daughter Hesione from this fate on her father's promise of some supernatural horses. But perfidious Laomedon never learned. Once the girl was safe, he refused to hand over the immortal mares; so Herakles gathered his gang and sacked the city. King Priamos was a son of Laomedon.

On the other hand, archaeology suggests that the real Troy underwent at least four or five "falls" during the second millennium B.C., as follows:

Troy V taken by the Aryans, 1800 B.C.

Troy VI destroyed by earthquake, 1300 B.C.

Troy VIIa captured, sacked, and burned, 1260 B.C.

Troy VIIb-1 taken by the Knobby Ware people, 1180 B.C.

Troy VIIb-2 burned, accidentally or otherwise, 1100 B.C.

Records of the Hittite Empire, dug up early in this century at the Hittite capital of Hattusas, cast a feeble light upon affairs in western Anatolia during this period. These tablets briefly mention an Atarisiyas of Akhiyawa and an Alaksandus of Wilusa. The resemblance to Atreus of Achaia (father of Agamemnon and Menelaos) and Alexandros of Ilios (that is, Paris of Troy) seems too marked for coincidence. Homer's Greek had a *w*-sound, represented by a letter like F, which later dropped out of the literary language. "Ilios" was once "Wilios"; "Achaioi" was "Achaiwoi."

In Hittite times, there were two kingdoms in western Asia Minor: Arzawa in the southwest and Assuwa north of it. "Assuwa" evolved through "Assua" and "Asua" into our word "Asia," which originally meant the country later called Lydia. Alaksandus is mentioned about 1300 B.C. as ruler of a northwestern province of Arzawa. A century later, a Hittite king complains in a letter about Atarisiyas, who had helped the adventurer Maduwatas to seize the Arzawan throne.

Alexandros could not well have fought against the sons of Atreus if he lived a century before Atreus, but there may have been any number of men by those names. Arzawa and Assuwa, like

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Homeric Troy, seem to have been illiterate, so there are no inscriptions from those places to help us to straighten out the tangle. But, according to the Hittite inscriptions, all through the XIIIth century B.C., Achaians—perhaps from Rhodes or perhaps from the Greek mainland—adventured along the west coast of Anatolia. They raided and conquered when and where they could. In a general way, the Homeric story reflects this movement.

The most splendid Troy, Troy VI, was destroyed by a natural catastrophe about half a century before the capture of Troy VIIb-1 by the Knobby Ware folk. The Homeric description comes closest to fitting Troy VI, while the traditional date of the fall of Troy, 1184 B.C., comes closer to fitting twice-destroyed Troy VII.

When we compare the Homeric poems with other legend cycles, like that of Siegfried, it is plain that we have a *conflation*. Some of Homer's people may have once been real, and some of his incidents may be based upon actual events. But, whereas in real life the people and events were widely scattered through time and space, the Poet brought them together in one grand fictional spectacle, like a school pageant that shows Washington crossing the Delaware and, seconds later, Lincoln freeing the slaves. No man to spoil a good story for the sake of a few facts, Homer described Troy VI at its grandest, making it even larger and finer than life. He then combined Troy's several falls into one. He included the most dramatic incidents from several wars in a single narrative, with a generous sauce of purely imaginary events like the interventions of the gods.

After all, who would have listened to an account of the sack of a shabby little earthquake-ruined town by a boatload of Rhodian pirates, when he could hear a stirring epic about a splendid, tragic war of all the kings of Hellas against the mightiest city of Asia? But unless we find more inscriptions dealing with western Asia Minor in the XIIIth and XIIth centuries B.C., we shall never know for sure just what really happened at Troy: how many sieges there were and which were successful, where the attackers came from, whether a real Alexandros was ever king of Troy, and whether Helen was really a beautiful runaway queen or just one more humanized fertility goddess.

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The colonists had a promising contract with the Medarians; if all worked out well, the experimental colony would be enlarged. All was not going well, and the problem was essentially a human one; some colonists believed that you don't make contracts with things with blue skin and red eyes.

FUN-NEE

by Miriam Allen deFord

WHEN TODD SLOAN TURNED his hoverer from the highway (so-called; it was still a hard-packed dirt road) at the sideway that marked the beginning of his holding, he saw to his astonishment that his eight-year-old son Neddie was perched on the fence waiting.

"Good Space, boy, how did you know I was getting back this morning?" he exclaimed. "I didn't know it myself till about an hour ago."

"Hi, dad. Funny told me."

"Fun-Nee: don't call her Funny."

The natives were telepathic, he had found that out, but he hadn't known they were as accurate as all that. It put the colonists at a disadvantage; the Medarians could read their minds, but they couldn't reciprocate.

Neddie laughed, and started to sing:

Has anybody here kissed Funny—
F-U-double N-Y?
Has anybody here kissed Funny,
Anybody want to try?
Oh, her eyes are red and her skin is blue,
And she is funny through and through.
Has anybody here kissed Funny,
Would anybody here know why?

"That isn't fu—amusing, Neddie," Sloan said, as severely as he ever could speak to the apple of his eye. "She can't help the color of her skin or her eyes, and we probably look as revolting to her as she does to us. Besides, that's nothing but a parody of a folk song on Earth about 200 years ago. Wherever did you learn it?"

"Joey taught it to me. He says his father says we haven't got good sense, taking one of them right into our house."

Todd frowned. Joey's father was his chief worry as Executive

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Head of the Earth Colony. Joseph Scales, Sr., had had the fixed idea that *he* was going to be Head, and Sloan had already had to scotch two or three little snide schemes to get him out and put Scales in. But that was nothing to mention to Neddie; Joseph, Jr., was his dearest pal, and Neddie's parents would have been ashamed to forbid their friendship because Joey's father was their enemy. Perhaps, Todd thought wryly, he and Myrt were just a bit too civilized for the likes of Scales and his disciples.

Neddie had climbed into the hoverer as soon as his father had stopped, and they would be home in no time. He wouldn't have a chance to say much to the boy, but he must nip in the bud any Joey-induced tendency to offend their guest.

"I hope you haven't been singing that nonsense where Fun-Nee could hear it," he admonished his son. "You know she's picking up Novanglian pretty fast."

"Aw, heck," said Neddie. "Joey says you don't have to be polite to the Goops."

This time Todd really was angry. This was his own private project, put over with difficulty in the Council against filibustering by Scales, to invite selected Medarians for extended house visits and gradually to ease their suspicion and formal observance of the contract, and get the colony established with their full co-operation and without friction. Fun-Nee was the first experiment, and in the get-acquainted tour he was just completing, he had made tentative arrangements for more of the natives to come and live for several months with others of the leading Terrestrial newcomers. He had been pleased at the enthusiasm with which volunteers had come forward—more, he was afraid, than there would be hosts able and willing to receive them; but now, if there was going to be this kind of underhand sniping at the guests, his project would do more harm than good. No use saying anything more to an eight-year-old, but after his report to the Council on his trip, the whole thing would have to be brought out in the open and discussed. With vehement opposition from the Scales faction, of course.

So all he said now was: "Fun-Nee is our guest, Neddie. You don't insult guests. And she comes from a very good Medarian family, in one of their highest clans. You and Joey do your singing where she can't hear you and have her feelings hurt. And don't call the Medarians Goops—that's silly and vulgar," he added sharply.

They had reached the house now, and Myrt had heard the hoverer and was waiting in the doorway. Fun-Nee was invisible, probably in her own room. The Sloans had noticed her sensitivity and tact; she wouldn't intrude on

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the homecoming. Todd had been gone for a week.

Two days later, with the Council meeting scheduled for that evening, he decided to consult Fun-Nee herself.

With Neddie off somewhere playing with Joey, and the evening's chores done, it was a good time for him and Myrt and Fun-Nee to get together on the porch in the soft Medarian twilight. He wanted Myrt there; not only did he trust her judgment better than his own, but he felt that a woman-to-woman approach would go better with Fun-Nee.

"I've wanted to tell you about my trip, Fun-Nee," he began, careful to use short and simple words. It was hard enough to understand the Medarian's sibilant speech when he was sure she knew what he had said. Perhaps because they communicated telepathically among themselves, the natives were taciturn and spoke in hissing whispers.

Fun-Nee turned her strange red eyes upon him—they really were red; they shone like rubies—and smiled, her blue lips curving around her toothless mouth. For a second Sloan had to conquer his instinctive revulsion, hoping it did not show on his too open face. Myrt was better at that; by now she actually did not seem to notice the Medarian's grotesque appearance. She admired Fun-Nee's collection of gauzy, multicolored sari-like robes which were the native wear of both sexes, and never quailed when the girl drew the hood away from her hairless skull.

"Yiss, you see my familee?" asked Fun-Nee eagerly.

Quite a family, Todd reflected; more like a tribe, with groups of four sisters married to four brothers, and all the children calling all the elders father and mother. By the time that got back another generation or two—and the Medarians were long-lived—each marriage-group, with its inevitable eight offspring, practically constituted a widespread clan.

"Yes, I did," he said. "I should have told you that right away. Everybody wanted to know how you liked it here and how you were and sent you greetings and love."

"I am first visitor, gives me mooch admire," responded Fun-Nee complacently.

"Well, I think we'll have some more visitors soon, if things work out the way I hope. Several of your people spoke to me about coming for a trial visit. Some of them were among your own sisters and brothers—or cousins?"

"I know; they tell me."

Told her by mind-communication, of course, since she was a hundred miles and a mountain range away from her valley home. They sent polite messages, but they knew very well how things were going with her.

He thought uneasily: how

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much does she pick up of the opposition, the bigotry? He had better find out, before more of her people put themselves in her position.

Carefully, he said, "Tonight I am telling the Council, and asking who can welcome others into their homes. I am sure there will be many. But I think you should know that a few among us are not very friendly to the plan."

"Not people that matter," Myrt interposed swiftly. "Just a few older people who are set in their ways."

"Same as wiz us, no?" Fun-Nee remarked. "You not find some of us afraid to come? Not *my* familee—we all veree good."

"Not afraid—just reluctant, a few of them. I told them we realize this is *your* world, not ours, and we are grateful to you for letting us share it. I explain, as I did when I first went to your country and met *you,* how overcrowded our planet is, and since you have so much space you don't need, all we want is a bit of it on which we can live peacefully and make a living for ourselves without doing any harm to you. But, as you say, on both sides there are those—we thought we had them weeded out, but there are always mistakes—who do not see things as most of us and most of you do."

He could hear Scales on that subject: "Mealy-mouthed, white-livered cowards! What we ought to do is wipe the Goops out and take over the planet and let some honest-to-God human beings run it instead of those indecent monstrosities. And to hell with the contract."

"Yiss," said Fun-Nee calmly. "I know. Wiz us, a few old ones, don't like change, don't like new things, did not want you here, do not want more. Wiz you, ones like Scales. I know that."

"Let's not name names, Fun-Nee," Myrt said gently. "Not on either side. We came here, as Todd said, looking for a new home where our children could grow up into good men and women. And I am sure that when you are married and have children of your own you will understand why we were willing to leave everything behind us and undergo the uprooting and the long difficult journey for their sake."

"Plizz?" said Fun-Nee, blushing purple.

"Never mind," Todd said hastily. He should have warned Myrt that to a Medarian it was obscene to mention his or her marriage or children until the individual addressed formed part of an eight-member marriage-group. He knew that Fun-Nee was waiting for one sister to grow a little older, when the four brothers from the proper tribe destined for them would propose their union.

"What I wanted you to understand, Fun-Nee," he went on, "is

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that if perhaps at the Council meeting tonight everybody does not agree with what I say to them, you are not to take it personally or pay attention to it. Even though you won't be there, I know you will hear-with-the-mind"—that was the way Medarians described their telepathic power—"what happens, and it mustn't upset you."

"Will not," said Fun-Nee firmly. "I expect."

"We'll talk about it frankly together later on, on the basis of whatever happens. Now it's time for us to leave, Myrt. Fun-Nee, you won't mind being here alone for two or three hours, will you? Neddie will be back soon, but he knows he must go right to bed, and he won't bother you."

"Neddee no bozzer. He not run round wiz Joeyboy, we get along fine." It was all right to mention other people's children—just not one's own future children.

"Well, we'll soon be doing something about that, too, I hope."

The Council Hall was crowded, as he had guessed it would be. Practically every able-bodied adult in the colony was there, with Joseph Scales and his followers belligerently manning the whole front row.

It was worse than he had feared. No sooner had he begun to broach the subject of bringing in more native visitors, than Scales was on his feet.

"Hold on there, Todd!" he yelled. "This is *our* home—we want the Goops kept out of it!"

"This is their home too, you know, Joe," said Sloan, fighting down his anger. "It was their home first, and they didn't have to let us into it."

There was a growl from the front row.

"Wipe them out and take over," muttered a Scales adherent. "We need the whole planet, not just a little corner of it."

"Bill," Todd explained patiently, "aside from the fact that this colony is a tiny minority on Medaria, you know very well our colonization was by interplanetary agreement. You understood that before you signed up. They were to let us in as an experimental group, and then if everything went well, they would gradually let us use as much of their territory as they themselves, with their small, regulated population, did not need."

"Bullshit. They ain't human. You don't make contracts with things with blue skin and red eyes and no hair or teeth."

Pandemonium broke out. People were shouting on both sides, jumping up from their seats. Two fistfights started. Sloan, as chairman, banged his gavel in vain. Finally he had had enough. He signaled to an assistant and suddenly the lights went out. Silence fell. Somebody laughed.

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"O.K.," Sloan said. "This will be all for tonight. I'm not running a zoo here." ("Oh, yes, you are," a voice snickered. "Your friends the Goops are nothing but animals.") "If we can't discuss things like grown-up human beings, we'll just shut down till we can all get hold of ourselves."

The lights came on again. The doors were opened. Rather shamefaced, as if they had been ducked in cold water, the troublemakers began to disperse. Not Scales, though; he stood his ground. "You're not holding any rump meeting with just your own kind here, Sloan!" he barked.

"We're not holding *any* meeting, thanks to you. I'll entertain a motion for adjournment." It was made and seconded instantly from the floor. "We'll try again in a few days when we've had time to cool down. This meeting is adjourned."

"That wasn't so good," he worried, as he and Myrt walked home. Behind them little knots of men and women were still arguing. There were only a few of Scales's followers, but they were noisy. He was rather sorry they had stopped fighting; that might have served as a catharsis.

"I know from Joey, via Neddie, what Scales and his bunch think —if you can call it thinking," Myrt agreed. "But I expected they'd try reasonable argument first."

"They don't know what 'reasonable' means. We'll have to handle it some other way."

"Of course, it's primarily because Joe Scales wanted your job. Isn't there some way he and his lot could be deported? They've violated the contract we all signed."

"How could we deport them? There'll be nothing here to take them away until we've notified Earth to send on the next batch of colonists. Our ship's back there long ago."

"I know—it was just wishful thinking. What scares me is that this little bunch of malcontents may ruin the whole project, after all our work here and all you've done to keep on friendly terms with the Medarians. If it came to 'wiping out,' they could wipe us out a lot faster than we could them."

"There's no question of that. The Medarians are a peaceful people. But they could notify us that the arrangement was off, and tell us all to go. We ought to have been much more rigid about processing our own people."

"I suppose the ones who didn't really accept the contract terms just kept their opinions to themselves," Myrt said. "Or maybe they didn't realize till they got here how hard it would be for them to accept such very different beings."

They walked on in gloomy si-

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lence. As they reached their gate she said, "I hope Fun-Nee hasn't had too dull an evening all alone."

She hadn't.

Soon after they had left, Neddie came whistling home. What he was whistling was the tune his father had forbidden him. "Hi, Funny," he said, but under his breath. In general he was an obedient child; he brushed his teeth and washed and went to bed.

Fun-Nee, in the room they had given her, waited until she was sure he was asleep. That was totally unnecessary, for the Medarians knew by now that the Earthmen were entirely nontelepathic, but it was a precaution, ingrained in them all, to keep their own young from eavesdropping on private conversations.

Then she began to speak-and-hear-with-the-mind.

"Tonight they are having a meeting," she reported. "There is mooch trouble. The one with whom I stay cannot control them."

"Is it better we come and get you now?" her father—one of her fathers—asked.

"Not yet. I am safe. I would always know."

"You are a good girl, Fun-Nee. We are proud of you."

"Thank you, father," said Fun-Nee modestly. "It is for Medaria."

By the time the Sloans arrived home, she was asleep.

"Dad," said Neddie pensively, two mornings later, as he helped his father feed the hens, whose remote ancestors had come with them in the spaceship, "I don't think I like Joey any more."

"Well, that's too bad, son—you've always been such pals. What's wrong?"

"Yesterday, at recess, he called you a dick—dick something. I said you were not, and he said his dad told him so. I said what did it mean, and he said you wanted to be high mucky-muck and run everything."

"Dictator. I see."

"Yes, that was it. And Joey said his dad is going to take the starch out of you and put you where you belong, down with the Goops."

"The Medarians."

"Joey calls them Goops. *Do* you, Dad? How can you belong with them, when you have hair on your head and teeth in your mouth and decent-colored skin and eyes?"

"We all belong with everybody in the universe, Neddie, with all intelligent beings everywhere, no matter how any of us may look on the outside."

"Joey said that's the kind of talk that means you're a—I forget the word. Oh, yes, I remember—his dad says you're a blueskin-lover."

"That's enough of that now, Neddie," said his father sharply. But immediately he added, "Joey says those things without under-

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standing them, just mimicking his dad. What you should do is to ask him what he means—you'd find out right away he doesn't know. . . . Say, that's an idea. Use the kids as go-betweens."

Neddie looked interested.

"Can I be a go-between?" he inquired eagerly. "What is it? What do I do?"

"You can't do anything, if you break off with Joey."

"I won't, then. How do I do it?"

"Give me a little time to figure it out, Neddie. Come on, get those eggs in to your mother and get ready for school."

"Fun-Nee," he asked her that evening, "would you like to cut your visit short? Do you want me to take you home again?"

She looked at him with surprise. How could one of the shut-mind people possibly know about her conversation with her father? Sloan guessed her bewilderment, and smiled.

"No, I can't telepath. It's just that we're likely to have a bit of trouble here, and I don't want you involved in it."

"Not worry," she said proudly. "I am safe."

He talked the idea over with his wife.

"Neddie's a bright boy," Myrt said meditatively. "He wouldn't be so attached to Joey Scales if there weren't something there worth liking. Joey had a mother too, you know. You remember poor Ellen Scales—she was quite superior to her brute of a husband."

"The whole thing is, Scales is jealous and resentful. He thinks he should have had my job, and he still wants it."

"Well, you were first elected, and then officially appointed, so he has no claim to it."

"Quite true, dear. But the point is, if this situation isn't resolved pretty quickly, it might well mean the end of the whole colony—maybe the end of us."

"Oh, Todd!"

Sloan set his jaw.

"Don't worry, Myrt," he echoed Fun-Nee's words to him. "I have no intention of letting it happen."

All he said to Fun-Nee was that he had to make a brief visit to another Medarian "family."

"Better than that," he smiled at her—noticing how she averted her red eyes from those strange white objects in his mouth—"I'm going to beg a short leave from school for Neddie and take him along with me."

Fun-Nee was too polite to say anything, but he could see the relief in her expression. No Neddie meant no Joey.

Neddie, naturally, was delighted—even though the school principal exacted a promise that he would do all the homework his teacher provided him.

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"What I'm hoping to do, son," his father told him as they rode away from the colony land, "is to arrange for a sort of extension of Fun-Nee's visit to us. That's why I want you as a go-between."

"You don't mean you're going to leave me with the Goo—with the Medarians?" Neddie asked in alarm.

"Certainly not. Didn't I tell the school I'd have you back in class as soon as I returned? You'll see."

The clan he visited this time was one long acquainted with him, and on the most amiable terms. The headman promised full and enthusiastic co-operation; the Medarians had no chauvinistic prejudices. Todd had counted on this; his primary object was to let Neddie loose among the Medarian children during his long colloquies with their elders, with a view to using him as a catalyst when they got home again. It was a risk: the boy might be so fully Scales-indoctrinated by now that he would offend his hosts. But Sloan banked on his and Myrt's influence against Joey's. Neddie might boast a bit, and throw his weight around, but Todd was pleased to hear sounds of revelry outside the conference quarters, and a quick glance showed his son absorbed in a complicated throwing and running game.

That part accomplished, the next task was to tackle his own people.

One thing in his favor was that his own adherents—and actually a preponderant majority of the colony—had dozens of little boys and girls among them, whereas Scales and his disciples, most of them unmarried or the hidebound elderly, could produce only a few besides Joey.

He called another Council meeting, and as expected, Joe Scales and his outfit were out in force and up in front as before. But this time the question of Medarian visitors did not come up at all. Instead, Todd Sloan, smiling broadly, announced that late summer, after the harvest, was going to see something new in the colony—a real holiday for as many people as possible, after their long, hard toil.

"Of course we've got years of labor and care still ahead of us," he said, "but we've reached a point now where we can let down for a while and give ourselves a bit of fun and leisure."

It had been needless for him to have alerted friendly bellwethers to manifest delight. Everybody except a few surly diehards looked pleased, and the applause was genuine. Even the Scales contingent manifested a grudging and skeptical approval—until they heard the details.

"So for us grownups," Todd went on, "we're planning all sorts of entertainment. We're organizing a committee, for which we'll

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want volunteers, to see what we can rustle up in the way of dances, concerts, plays, festivals, what have you. And for the kids —well, we all love our children and wouldn't be without them for worlds, but, honestly, it would be a real vacation, wouldn't it, to have a month free of responsibility and discipline, and to know that while we're enjoying ourselves in *our* way, the kids will be having the time of their lives somewhere else, in *theirs.*"

Laughter and applause, and whoops from the young.

"So what we have in mind is to establish a real summer camp, the kind kids used to go to on Earth a few generations ago when there was space to spare. Of course—the same way a few people will have to keep the essential things going here during our holiday—there will have to be adults to look after them, some of us who get more fun out of taking care of the children than we do out of any other form of amusement. My wife and I, for instance, and we'll ask for volunteers for that too—we shan't need many.

"We'll teach them woodcraft and life-saving and things like that—some of you may remember reading about an ancient organization called Boy Scouts who did the same kind of thing—and there will be hikes and games and contests and cookouts and singing around the bonfire.

"How many of you kids would like to go for about three weeks to a camp like that? Not babies, of course—just, say, boys and girls from about six to fourteen?"

There was a roar of hearty agreement from the young ones lining the walls and crowding the windowsills. This time the meeting had been called for early evening so the kids could attend too.

"And then—"

Joe Scales interrupted. His lot had been exchanging nudges and grimaces and mutterings for some time. Now he jumped to his feet.

"Where's this camp going to be?" he demanded suspiciously.

"Well, that's not definite yet, but on my trip last week I found a swell spot just about three miles from our border that has woods and a lake and—"

"You mean in Goop territory? What you aiming to do, Todd Sloan, let our kids get mixed up with those nasty critters? Or were you maybe inviting the Goops to send their younguns to the same place and have them and ours camp together?"

"Wait a minute, Joe. We'll all have a chance to discuss the whole thing. Just let me finish telling the kids all the fun we're planning for them."

"Not for *my* boy, you're not—not if he's supposed to be palsy-walsy with your darling Goops!"

"Mine, neither!" "It's a blue-skin-lover's plot!" The yells were

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few but loud, climaxed by a screech from one of the female Scales-followers to the effect that her little girl (an unattractive teen-ager) wasn't going to be contaminated by associating with any of those horrid, dirty, violent, half-human natives. There were opposition shouts, and Todd was afraid this meeting would break up the way the earlier one had done.

He was saved, to his intense surprise, by his own son. Neddie climbed on his chair and with all the strength of his eight-year-old lungs bellowed: "Everybody shut up and let me talk!"

There were gasps, and laughter, and amused applause. Todd couldn't have done better if Neddie had been briefed beforehand.

Neddie looked scared now at the effect he had created, and close to tears. But he gulped them back, and in the sudden silence he said bravely, "My dad took me with him when he went to see the —them, and the kids there were nice to me. They taught me games and they didn't make fun of me when I was bad at them. And after a while you don't notice the way they look—they're just like people."

Todd jumped from the platform to where the boy was standing on his chair and laid a hand on Neddie's shoulder. The shoulder was shaking, but Neddie stood his ground.

"They're *nice* people!" he insisted firmly. Somebody started to applaud, and soon hands were clapping all over the room.

"Of course," Todd Sloan interposed smoothly, "you understand that this whole thing is purely voluntary. Any kids who would rather stick around here while their parents are going off to grown-up activities, or any parents who would rather have their children underfoot all summer, need only say so."

"Me for one!" called the irrepressible Scales. But this time he was all alone.

"That's too bad," said Todd. "One thing we had in mind was making some of the brighter, more responsible kids Junior Counselors, to organize hikes and picnics and that sort of thing. And your boy was one I had in mind for that; he's a natural leader. But of course if you won't let him join in, he'll miss out on all that."

Joey's face was a study. He had been perched on a windowsill, and now he hopped down and ran over to his father. Scales stooped to his whisper, and a mean grin split the man's face.

"All right," he said abruptly. "I don't want my boy left out of anything. If everybody else goes, he can too."

Sloan didn't need to be telepathic to interpret that whispered conversation. That could be dealt with in due course. Meanwhile,

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he thought, let's wind things up for tonight. So he climbed back on the platform and raised his hand for silence against the buzz of talk and laughter.

"O.K., folks," he said. "The next thing is for me to make one more trip to Medarian territory and see how *they* like the joint-camp idea. We've got a month or so before it could start, and I'll report back as soon as I have more details to give you. Anybody who wants to be on the committee of arrangements, come up here and give me his or her name."

That was that: so far, so good, but plenty of hurdles to leap over yet.

One of which turned out to be Fun-Nee.

In recent days there had been a new bounce and radiance observable in the Medarian girl; the Sloans suspected that she had received some good news from home that she was keeping to herself. She was very enthusiastic about the plans for the mild summer festivities (which to her must have sounded like a series of dizzying social events), and Todd had the idea that if she was ready to be taken back home after the plans were farther along, she would be invaluable in persuading her relatives and friends to accept further invitations and perhaps to issue some of their own. The important thing was to offset the planting of ugly seeds of racial hatred by Scales and his adherents. Though now he was beginning to make a little progress, there was still a long row to hoe.

"Neddie," he said to his son as the boy trotted after him doing his before-school chores, "has Joey talked to you much about the summer camp?"

The temporary breach had been closed, and Neddie and Joey were as inseparable as ever. Todd hated to make a spy out of Neddie, but it was vital to know what the Scales lot had up their sleeves. He was pretty sure that what Joe Scales had suggested to his son was that he should go to the camp, act as a Junior Counselor —and then make life so miserable for the Medarian children that the result would be far worse than if no attempt at fraternization had ever been made. He was sure also that Joey was under strict orders to keep the scheme from others, and most secret of all from Neddie. But after all Joey was only nine, a year older than Neddie, and most unlikely to keep his mouth shut forever.

Sure enough, Neddie reported that Joey was being very mysterious but hinting about something that was going to happen. Todd couldn't bring himself to ask Neddie to urge anything more from his chum, but he wondered if he himself couldn't have it out with

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the boy and try to make him see the error of his ways. Not much hope, probably—his father's influence was too strong. Still, perhaps by playing on the kid's self-importance—

It wasn't necessary.

Fun-Nee came to him, her eyes glowing red.

"I have good news from my familee!" she exclaimed. "Youngest sister is beginning to bud! Soon she be ready, and then we four marry our four husbands!"

"That's wonderful news, Fun-Nee," said Sloan sympathetically (wondering just what Fun-Nee meant by "budding"; surely the Medarians were mammals, just like the colonists).

"So now I am woman. I can hear my children spoken of wizzout shame, and I can tell the truth."

"Well, that's fine, but I supposed you'd always spoken the truth."

"Oh, no," Fun-Nee replied gayly, "While young girl, must be polite. Now I talk-with-mind my familee, tell them you want your young, our young, have maybe summer living togezzer, and they say yiss, perhaps, but first you bring here that man and his son and let me talk to them plain and tell them real truth. You do that?"

"You mean Joe Scales?"

"Yiss, Scales. I talk, I make up mind if they listen right. If O.K., then my people be glad to help. But if not, no, never.

"When you bring him here? I want boy too. You be here too, Todd, and Myrt, and now you let Neddee hear me talk straight."

"I'll try." Todd felt dubious. This was a new Fun-Nee, not the shy, amiable girl he and Myrt had grown fond of. "But suppose he doesn't want to come?"

"Then he be sorry. You tell him that too. Because if he not let me talk to him private, then I talk to him at big meeting, and he wish not. No more now; you tell me when."

"What do you think we should do?" he asked Myrt. Practical as always, she answered, "Curiosity will bring him if nothing else. He wouldn't meet Fun-Nee alone, but here in our home he'll hope to get something on us he can use against us."

"I hate to let him and his brat inside our door," Todd grumbled.

"Nonsense, dear; you've had the brat here daily, so if he brings his papa along once for a formal conference, I guess we'll all survive."

"You're right, of course; I was just being childish. Well, I'll see what I can do. My guess is he'll refuse to come."

But Myrt's psychology was better than his. Two evenings later, Messrs. Scales Sr. and Jr. arrived on the dot, defensiveness bristling visibly about them. Myrt's idea

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had been to make a kind of social function out of it—drinks and amenities and general conversation leading up to the encounter—and Todd had been willing to go along for the sake of diplomacy, but Fun-Nee vetoed that.

"He decide to have good sense, *then* you shake hand, break bread," she pronounced firmly. "First I talk, what you call straight from shoulder, equal to equal."

So it was the Medarian visitor who opened the door as Joe and Joey approached and without a vestige of her toothless smile motioned them into the living room, where the Sloans were waiting. Neddie had been told as little as possible, and Joey had pestered him all day for information he could honestly say he didn't have. The boys' greetings were subdued; they were both a little awed and nervous. As for Joe, Sr., his nod to Myrt skirted the barest civility, and neither Todd nor Fun-Nee herself was granted even so much as that.

Fun-Nee waved father and son to seats. She stood facing them, her red eyes staring into their brown ones.

"I ask Todd Sloan bring you here, Joe Scales and son," she began abruptly, "because now I talk what you call straight turkey to you.

"My people have power you not have—we talk through minds, not joost through voices. What I say, my familee and my people *tell* me to say. My word is their word. You take it or leave it."

"Look here, Sloan, what's all this about?" Scales demanded, starting to rise. "I don't have to take any guff from a Goop."

"Sit down, Joe. Fun-Nee asked me to arrange this interview, you agreed, and you're here. I don't know what's on her mind any more than you do. Let's act like grown men and hear her out."

Reluctantly Scales slid back in his chair. Todd guessed that if the boy had not been present, he would have made more of a resistance, but he was afraid of losing face with his son. That motherless boy was the one chink in Joseph Scales's tough armor.

"Is better," said Fun-Nee curtly. "Now listen.

"Medarians people love peace, not fight, not hate. You come here from other world, tell us no room for you there, must find new home; we have land we do not use, we welcome you, help you all we can. Mostly we glad we do, you good people too, you make good neighbors, we ready welcome more of you. But not welcome, not accept, not want little hard group who hate, who grab, who waken in us feelings, powers, we try long ago civilize out of selves.

"For this long time we wait, we polite, we keep quiet, we hope maybe your colony get rid of its

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own badness. Todd, we know you our friend, we wait for you to act."

Todd Sloan reddened. Useless to explain political necessity, the processes of democracy or of diplomacy, to the straight and simple Medarian mind. Joe Scales grinned covertly. He knew that Sloan would never dare risk a showdown with no way to eliminate either contestant without exploding the whole enterprise.

"So when this not happen, we think, what do next? Then Todd come, ask would any of us wish visit you in colony, get really know you well. Perhaps this is it. So they choose me."

"I thought you volunteered, Fun-Nee," Myrt exclaimed, surprised. Fun-Nee shook her hairless head.

"Nobody of us act alone. Choose me for two reasons: I was useless, could not live life of full human being until youngest sister budded. True too of two older sisters and of four brothers to be our husbands, but in one way I do volunteer—which is second reason. I the only one of us strong enough stomach, able be so close to you."

"Why, Fun-Nee," Myrt cried, "I never dreamed—I had no idea you felt about us like—like—"

"Same you feel about us?" Fun-Nee responded mildly. "Myrt, is natural. Two kinds of being, so very different, joost enough alike to make difference feel wrong—we cannot help feeling. But most of us know this primitive response, we shamed, we overcome. I not revolt you now, Myrt, you not revolt me; underneath we know the real person.

"But not Mr. Joseph Scales and his friends." Her voice turned bitter. "They say—'different, I hate, I am disgust.' What you *think*, Joseph Scales? You *think* my people *like* that horrid pink color skin, those dead muddy eyes, that sickening growth on your boiled-meat head and body, those pieces bone sticking through your gooms?"

The formal, rhetorical speech had been dictated and rehearsed, that was clear. But obviously Fun-Nee also felt it personally and deeply.

She stopped, fighting to get hold of her breath. Joe Scales stared at her, transfixed. For the first time it seemed to strike his self-centered mind that he might be as repulsive to the Medarians as they were to him. As for Joey, he gaped, his mouth open. Suddenly his normal, healthy skin and eyes and hair and teeth were made to sound like strange unpleasant afflictions.

"So," Fun-Nee went on relentlessly, "you teach your little boy nasty song to make fun of our beautiful skin bright like the sky, our eyes shining red like the sun. He teach Todd's little boy, and

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Neddee sing it where I hear. And I say nossing, because I still not woman and cannot speak impolite."

Neddie looked on the verge of tears. "I'm sorry, Fun-Nee," he muttered. "After that trip I made with dad I changed my mind about you."

"I know, Neddee. Not angry."

"Well, what *do* you want?" Joe Scales burst out. "What's all this leading to? Sure, I suppose we make you as sick as you make us; I never thought of it that way, but it stands to reason. And perhaps if I'd realized that, I'd have been politer and made my kid be politer. But what's the point?"

"The point, Joseph Scales," Fun-Nee said, "is that now for last time we give you choice. Either you and your friends learn this *our* home, you here on sufferance, and if you behave bad we not want you—or you not learn, and we must act."

"Act?" growled Scales. "What could *you* do?"

Fun-Nee smiled her toothless smile.

"Once I say, use our power on all of you. But we have learn to know and respect and love our friend Sloan and his familee, and so too nearly all of you. But not *you*—not you as you are now."

The only word Scales had listened to was "power." *"What* power?" he snapped viciously. Fun-Nee shook her head sadly.

"You no think *why* we have room this planet for us, for you, for others? *Why* we have only children we want, and fields always able give them food?"

"Population control—progressive agriculture—we have them too."

"So? But you not stop overcrowd your planet. And can *you* blast fertile field, reverse flourishing life? We can."

"So can we. So can anybody."

"Ah, yiss—destroy the field, kill the living being. But we can —"

Suddenly Fun-Nee reached out, caught Joey by his skinny shoulders, and drew him to her. The boy looked at her, half frightened, half pleased to be the center of attention. She went on, holding him tightly to her.

"Few days ago I could not do this, because I would break great taboo. Now you want proof, I could—any Medarian could—*think* at this child—and long as he live he be mindless, like animal." She stared straight into Joe Scales's eyes.

"Fun-Nee—no!" "Fun-Nee, you mustn't!" Todd and Myrt cried together. Neddie ran to his friend, who stood rigid from shock. As for Joey's father, with a bellow of terror, frustration, and sheer rage he threw himself bodily at the girl. Six inches from her he was arrested as if by a barrier. Fun-Nee smiled and released the boy.

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"I would not harm a child, Joseph Scales," she said calmly. "But now, believe I could?"

Pale and shaken, Scales shrugged his shoulders.

"I guess so," he mumbled grudgingly. "What do you want?"

Instead of answering him, Fun-Nee turned to the Sloans.

"I am sorree," she said. "My people do not like make show of our power. But they tell me now I must speak truth, last chance convince this man and his kind, either share our world in friendship or we must tell our good friends to leave and then blast fields and familees and selves of all who come as enemies."

There was an impressive silence. Todd was remembering back to the early days on Earth, when Medaria had first been discovered, when its civilized, human-like inhabitants had made their incredibly generous offer. It had been made plain then that this was to be no conquest, but the amicable sharing of resources. The Medarians, too courteous to threaten, had hidden their secret weapon. But even so, the leaders on Earth had screened the applicants thoroughly, they thought. Perfection, apparently, was impossible even by computer; a few bad specimens had passed through the screen. Here, in this first experimental colony, they were represented by Joseph Scales and his few but noisy followers. But undesirable as Scales might be, he had passed other aspects of the screening—he was intelligent, he was rational, he was capable of improvement. Todd Sloan waited, his heart beating fast. If all the man wanted was recognition and prestige, he was prepared to concede anything, short of complete control, in exchange for co-operation.

Still silence.

Ever since Fun-Nee had released Joey from her spell, he had stood beside his father, staring as if hypnotized. Now, suddenly, he burst into speech.

And what he said—in the amazed tone of one who, say, for the first time comprehends what nonrepresentational painting means—was:

"Funny! I think you're *pretty!*"

To his horror, Todd Sloan felt laughter gripping him. He struggled in vain. He exploded.

Then Myrt burst out laughing.

Then Neddie and Joey in unison . . .

Then Fun-Nee herself. . . .

And then, for the first time on Medaria, the air was split by a strange sound—the guffaws and heehaws of Joseph Scales, Sr.

Nobody knew why he was laughing, but nobody could stop. It was a catharsis, a volcanic eruption, a planetquake, a tidal wave, all rolled into one. It swallowed tension and fear and prejudice and hatred. They laughed at

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one another and at themselves, as only fellow humans can do.

At last Fun-Nee, wiping her ruby eyes—and now for the first time Todd noted that Medarian tears were blue—gasped: "And I think *you* pretty too, Joey! You pretty for your people, and I pretty for my people—everybody pretty for somebody."

That wound them up again.

Finally they began to unwind and come back to sober living. They were not the same people; they had shared an experience beyond will or reason.

"We must start soon to make our plans for the summer festivities," Todd said, bringing them back to practicality. "Now that Fun-Nee needs to get home to prepare for her wedding,"—the Medarian girl flushed a soft, becoming violet—"I must arrange to take her back to her family, and while I'm there to find out if her people want to join us in the camp and the other affairs."

"Oh, they will—they tell me already," Fun-Nee declared emphatically. "And the camp—we make also what you call Junior Counselors from our side, work togezzer wizz yours."

"Fine. I guess we have two of ours already—"

"Us!" Neddie chimed in. "Me and Joey."

"If it's O.K. with your dad, Joey."

And Joe Scales, reformed but not transformed, grunted, "I suppose it has to be."

"So that's settled, and as soon as I get back here, we'll call a committee meeting for the final preparations." (And if luck is with us, and this summer goes over safely, and Scales keeps his senses and keeps his crowd in order, it may mean the beginning of something permanent between us two species sharing one world.) "If there's no further business—"

"Wait!" Fun-Nee commanded them, "Neddee—Joey—that song you sing—"

Neddie looked abashed. Joey showed a flash of the old truculence, then had the grace to blush.

"So now we change that song, and all sing it togezzer, because Fun-Nee love you all, and glad go home but sorree leave you. Sing!"

And led by Fun-Nee herself, Neddie and Joey, with a background hum from Todd and Myrt, and even a note or two from Scales, sealed the friendly future with Fun-Nee's new version, undoubtedly polished and made ready for the occasion:

Oh, everybody here like Fun-Nee,
F-U-double N-E—
Cause no one like you more than Fun-Nee
And her sister-co-wives three.
Skins may be pink or may be blue,
But hearts are same way, through and through.
So here's to us and here's to Fun-Nee—
Twigs of our Galactic tree!

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You know by now that political candidates are packaged and sold like mouthwash. Fortunately, there are limits: nobody has yet figured out a way to package Eldridge Cleaver to make him look like George Wallace. Not yet . . .

THE CHAMELEON

by Larry Eisenberg

I WAS INDULGING MY HOBBY AND tracking marine iguana in the Galapagos, when the news flash came through. Senator Maynard had been shot down right on the Senate floor by a lunatic bystander in the gallery. It ruined my vacation. Once again the nation was stunned and took to its television sets for the catharsis of a prolonged and somber funeral.

The reaction of Congress, for once, was swift. Gun control was, of course, out of the question. But after a brief and highly emotional debate, it was decided to close Congress to visitors. In addition, a rider was added stipulating that henceforth all candidates for Federal office were to conduct their campaigns on television. Under no circumstances were they to address live audiences in excess of two hundred and fifty people.

It was this rider that almost ruined me. As the head of the leading publicity and advertising firm in the country, and the acknowledged master of the multimedia, I had landed Clint Speare as my client. Clint was an Oklahoman, owner of uncounted oil wells, and reputed to be worth several hundred millions. He ran perennially for the Presidential nomination and had never gotten it, although in each case he'd spent a small fortune trying.

I liked Clint. He was no intellectual and had a limited grasp of the subtleties of domestic and international politics, but he knew how to multiply dollars. And there was a huge bonus in the pot if I could get him the Presidency.

As soon as I returned to New York, I called Clint and told him it was important for us to get to-

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gether that evening. He sensed the urgency in my voice and agreed. I arrived with Al Dix, my confidant and general business major-domo.

Clint Speare was a hospitable host, short, round, somewhat paunchy, but with a firm handclasp and a booming laugh that had the ring of sincerity. He held his liquor magnificently, even though he had consumed a full quart over a three-hour period.

"Al must have told you," he said, shortly after we walked in. "This time I mean to win. I've never felt as confident, and Al agrees that my chances are very good."

"What I meant, was the following," said Al Dix, looking at me a little ruefully. His rimless glasses gave him the look of an earnest school teacher as he began to play with the hotel silverware on the snow-white tablecloth. "Clint projects superbly, in person. Turn him loose to press the flesh and he communicates his integrity to every man, woman and child in the street. If we key him to talking about the issues that are in everyone's heart, he definitely could make it."

"I agree," I interjected. "But to put it bluntly, when Clint goes on television, he looks like any other self-conscious, shifty-eyed politician. And now that Congress has banned in-person campaigning, we're really in trouble."

Clint's face grew somber.

"I just don't feel natural in front of those cameras," he said.

I looked at Al Dix and he looked at me. We both sighed. Suddenly Clint brightened.

"We're not licked yet, boys," he said, pouring us each another round of drinks. "You'll come up with something. And you know why? Because there's too much money at the end of that rainbow."

For days thereafter, I ran over several possibilities in my mind, but prospects were bleak. Clint was not my only client, but he provided most of our bread. I was overfocused on his problem, so much so that I found it hard to concentrate on other matters. It could only have been for this reason that I agreed to visit a small East Side theater, to see a demonstration of a new approach to consumer polls.

As I entered the theater, I saw Al Dix coming up the aisle with a tall, handsome black man. We shook hands warmly.

"This is Sam Carsons," said Al.

"I know," I said. "Sam and I are old friends."

"It's been fifteen years," said Sam. "Are you still bugged on lizards?"

"It helps me relax," I said, and we both grinned at memories of chaotic desert field trips in another era. "How is Lillian?" I added. "And the kids?"

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Sam shrugged.

"We're divorced." His fingers began to tremble, ever so slightly. It was an awkward moment, and Al solved it neatly.

"Let me tell you about Sam's new system," he said.

He sat me down in one of the center orchestra seats and fastened a small bracelet to my arm and a clip to my ear lobe.

"Sam has wedded an old idea to a new one. On your arm and ear are special sensors. They monitor your skin resistance, pulse rate, arterial pressure and blood gases, and tell us if you're angry, indifferent, happy, excited, and so on. This information is telemetered to a receiver backstage and processed by computer."

"Let me take over," said Sam. He looked at me with the beginning of a smile on his lips. "Would you like to see your father?"

I was jolted.

"My father?"

"We'll start," said Sam, "by projecting a three-dimensional image of a man onto stage center. It's done by a holographic process, and you might be fooled into thinking it was a real man. At first, he won't look a bit like your father. But I'll call out, *nose*. Depending on whether or not you think his nose is like your father's, it will begin to change until it is exactly like your father's nose. Then we'll go on to the eyes and so on."

I was intrigued but skeptical.

"Let's try it," I said.

The nose took form with surprising speed, then the eyes, the chin, ears, and hair styling. The complexion followed. Then I worked on the arms, posture, height and body shape. Within minutes my father looked out at me from the stage, big and frightening as he'd been in life.

"Uncanny," I said. My throat was choked and my heart was pounding.

"I developed this system," said Sam, "with the idea of selling it to the various Missing Persons Bureaus around the country. It seemed to me to be a hell of lot better than having an artist sketch from verbal description."

"Then," said Al Dix, "it occurred to him that he had a neat way of determining the best package for a perfume or a breakfast food. A computer stores all of the choices, and, depending on how the majority of the audience reacts, the package gets modified step by step to the most desirable form."

"It's a powerful idea," I said, still shaken by that man on stage who seemed to be my father. "What a pity it has no sound!"

"But it has!" said Sam. "Let's take your Dad one step further."

I was startled as the image began a rambling statement on the weather, in high-pitched falsetto. Then the voice began to deepen

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as I reacted. It shifted an octave lower. Next it developed a slight quaver, ultimately arriving at a thickening of the esses, adopting a New England twang, and my shock was complete. The total reproduction of my father in form and voice was unnerving.

"It's witchcraft," I told Sam, and he grew inches taller.

Al Dix was beaming as we shook hands all around. I looked at him for a moment and then a new connection suddenly went through.

"It's here," I said. "We've got the key to Clint Speare's problem right in this auditorium."

Al looked at me, puzzled.

"Don't you see?" I said, grabbing his arm with ferocious intensity. "By using representative audiences, we can find out exactly what Clint must say to please them. We can film these sessions, cut it into edited one-minute tapes, and spot them on television."

Al caught the idea immediately.

"It's wild," he said. "But it might work."

"Wait a minute," said Sam. "I'd like to know what's going on."

I told him the truth, but not all of it. I didn't think it expedient, yet. Sam was reluctant.

"It's not what I had in mind," he said. "I figured on packaging products, not people."

"Give it a try," I said. "I want a six-month option. At the end of the time, you'll have the right to veto the entire project if you want to. And I'll pay you well, more than you ever dreamed of."

"Let me think it over," said Sam.

I walked outside with Al Dix, and I sketched out some of the things I wanted to do with this system. Al added some of his own ideas, and our excitement began to build even further. After a suitable time, I reentered the auditorium. Sam was still sitting there, but on stage was Lillian, Sam's ex-wife, as lovely as I'd remembered her. The deep brown skin had a lustrous sheen. I backed out of the auditorium, waited a few minutes longer, and then called out before going inside. Lillian was offstage, now, although in another sense her image hadn't been on it. Having met her several times, I knew that she was white.

"I still have my doubts," said Sam, "but as long as I hold full rights to withdraw my system after a six-month trial, I'll take a chance."

We shook hands on the deal.

Our first live audience of two hundred viewers was made up of carefully chosen members of the suburban middle class. I can still see the pseudo Clint Speare as he appeared on stage. His voice was affirmative, strong, and his gaze level and direct. His ideas at first were vague, shapeless, with just a

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hint of something concrete underlying each point. He attacked crime in the streets, poverty, corruption in high places, disrespect to elders, the high cost of living, unfaithful allies, and the bankrupt policy of the current National Administration.

But then he began to heat up. His statements became more biting and he began to attack minority elements by name, his voice became passionate and the audience was aflame with excitement. I watched the real Clint Speare at my side, and it was amazing to see how he mimicked the projection on stage. The audience had narrowed the nostrils of the speaker slightly, and Clint Speare narrowed his. In some incredible way, he was adapting his facial muscles to the set of those of the pseudo Clint Speare. And he began to mutter, sotto voce, right along with the speaker, the words and phrases paralleling what came through to the audience. Afterwards, he was elated.

"Did you see that?" he kept saying. He was too excited to sit down.

"Remember," I warned. "That rousing ovation wasn't really for you. They were applauding themselves. And left to themselves they might abolish welfare, legislate restrictive housing, segregated schooling, the works."

"I intend to give them what they want," said Speare.

"Don't be a fool," I said. "There are other audiences. You've got to be something more than the man we saw on stage tonight."

Sam had said nothing but now he opened up.

"It was sickening," he said. "I was skeptical about this deal when it started, and I didn't know the half of it then. I'm pulling out."

"You missed the point," said Clint. "I'm no bigot. I'll satisfy *all* of the people."

"Sam," I said, "don't be hasty. You still have the right to withdraw after six months. But I have another test planned that I think you'd enjoy seeing. I want to set up our next speech before *an all black audience.*"

They were restive at the beginning until Clint Speare seemed to appear on stage. His appearance began to alter in subtle but important ways. The nostrils were broader, the skin a little darker, the hair more curly. The actions became broader, the voice intoned more rhythmically, and an impassioned plea for equal treatment under the law, in housing, schooling and jobs came from the mouth of the pseudo Clint Speare. At my side, the real Clint had taken on the look of the reconstructed stage figure, and was going along vocally with everything the speaker said. The close of the speech was greeted with an impassioned standing ovation that practically

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lifted us all out of our seats.

Afterward, Sam asked Clint how he had reacted to the audience.

"How do you feel about today's speech as compared to the last one?"

"I stand behind everything the man said on stage," said Clint. Sam was nonplussed.

"How can you? A certain amount of hedging is normal, but outright contradictions don't make sense. If one of these groups gets wind of what you're saying to the other, they'll cut you to pieces."

"That will never happen," said Clint. "I don't need that man on stage. I can sense what people want to hear. I'd like to go up there on my own, next time, with an audience that represents everybody."

"Not yet," I said. "You'd be getting ahead of the game."

"It won't wash for me," said Sam. "I never meant to create a human chameleon. I'm going to exercise my option to kill this deal."

"Don't knock chameleons," I said. "Besides, this system has gotten too big for petty squabbles. I'll be glad to pay you a fortune in royalties if you stay with us. But if you pull out, I still won't let go. You're a pretty sharp man, but I can buy all the brains I need to keep this thing going, and I will."

"You'd be infringing on my patent rights and breaking our agreement," said Sam. "I'd beat you in court."

I laughed.

"Go ahead," I said. "And in fifteen years I'd be forced to give you what I would have paid you anyway. And that's only if you win. Do you have the time and the money to buck my high-powered lawyers?"

He was silent. I thought of the time, seventeen years back, when Sam and I had been at college together. We'd held the Dean's office for three days and nights before the bust.

"Be smart, Sam," I said. "I don't want to do this. But I will if I have to. Don't make me, for old times' sake."

"Old times' sake," he snorted and walked out of the auditorium.

"What's he going to do?" said Al Dix.

"He'll stick," I said. "But I don't trust him any longer. I want another programmer put on this project right away. I want every move that Sam makes, checked and double-checked. I don't want anybody or anything sabotaging our next meeting."

"What kind of a meeting is that going to be?" said Clint Speare.

"We're going to run one more test with two hundred people chosen to match the entire national voting population. Let's see how our system works then!"

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It was clear that we could no longer count on Sam's help. He rarely appeared at the office, and when he did, he confined himself to biting remarks about amateur zoologists playing with human specimens. But he came to the key meeting. The audience was strikingly different from those we'd used before, weighted perfectly for income, age, color, and religion. Clint Speare was more jittery than I'd ever anticipated he could be.

And then, suddenly, I lost control. Just before the speech began, I became nauseated from the tension and had to leave the auditorium. I spent ten painful minutes turning myself inside out. When I came back, the air had filled with shock, and the figure of the pseudo Clint Speare on stage was immobile and silent.

I grabbed Al Dix's arm.

"What's going on?" I cried.

"That's *really* Clint up there," he said. "The damn fool ran on stage. He wanted to prove that he'd caught the true feelings of the entire nation. But when he got up there, he just seemed to freeze, as if all the crosscurrents of divided emotions were tearing him apart, inside."

"Get him off the stage!" I said. "Get him off at once!"

We did, but it was too late. Clint had gone through a nervous shock that had disintegrated all of his controls. It was clear that he would probably require hospitalization and extended treatment. As he was carried out to a waiting ambulance, I noticed that Sam was one of the stretcher bearers. When he came back, I stopped him.

"I guess you won out, after all," I said.

"I didn't win a goddam thing," he said. "I never hated Clint, personally, although it was clear that he wasn't fit for any office, let alone President. But you're the lizard man. You should have had the foresight to see what might happen."

"Foresight? To see what?"

"To visualize," said Sam slowly, "what happens when you put a chameleon on a plaid."

Coming next month

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BRIDGING THE GAPS

by Isaac Asimov

As I WRITE THIS, HOUGHTON MIFFLIN is publishing my hundredth book.* Last Sunday, the *Boston Globe* celebrated the occasion with a long article, and I understand the *New York Times* will shortly follow with another article. What's more, Houghton Mifflin is going to throw me a cocktail party on publication day.

All in all, this is enough to turn anyone's head so, lest I lose the lovable modesty which is my hallmark, I am keeping firmly in mind something that once happened to my mother.

Back in the early 1950s, my parents finally sold their candy store and moved into well-earned retirement. Naturally, time hung heavy on their hands, so my father got a part-time job that only took up forty hours a week (the candy store had taken up ninety) and my mother went to night school.

My mother felt keenly her inability to write English. She could write Russian and Yiddish, but neither language used the Latin alphabet. She could read English but didn't know the written letters, so she took a course in writing and made marvelous progress. In no time at all she was writing me letters in clear script.

Then, one evening she was stopped in the hall by a member of the night-school faculty who proceeded to ask her what we, in our family, call That Good Old Question. He said, "Pardon me, Mrs.

*The name is OPUS 100, *to forestall questions, and it is by way of being a kind of literary autobiography, with illustrative selections from earlier works.*

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Asimov, but are you related to Isaac Asimov, by any chance?"

My mother at once said, "Yes, indeed. Isaac Asimov is my son."

The teacher said, "Oh! Then no wonder you're such a good writer!"

Upon which my mother, well aware of the unidirectional flow of genes, drew herself up to her full four-feet-ten and said, freezingly, "I *beg* your pardon, sir. No wonder *he's* a good writer."

And, relying on the memory of that chastening remark to produce the proper sense of humility within myself, I will now turn to the subject of the month—which will continue from where I left off last month.

In the mid-19th Century, some three-score elements had been discovered, and chemists were growing rather anxious. Each decade was seeing the number increase: three had been discovered in the 1770s, five in the 1780s, five in the 1790s, *fourteen* in the 1800s, four in the 1810s, five in the 1820s, and so on.

Where would it all end? Scientists value simplicity, and when what had seemed simple to begin with grows increasingly complex, a new order of simplification is sought. In this case it grew tempting to find some way of ordering the tangled list of elements so that "element families" might show up. This would tame the jungle somewhat.

Indeed, if the elements were properly arranged, there might even be some way of determining how many elements might exist altogether and, therefore, how many remained yet to be discovered. In the mid-19th Century, however, this seemed like a mighty far-out thought.

The one quantitative measurement known for the atoms of the various elements at that time was the atomic weight. Thus, if the weight of the hydrogen atom (the lightest known, both then and now) is considered to be 1, the carbon atom, twelve times as massive, is assigned an atomic weight of 12, the oxygen atom is 16 and so on.*

To begin with, then, one might try to arrange the elements in the order of atomic weight to see if some rational family system would then show itself. It turned out that a rectangular table *could* be designed in which similar elements would occasionally show up in rows or in columns (depending on whether successive elements are arranged vertically or horizontally). Unfortunately, the earliest tables also put together some very *un*like elements, and in science a half-solution is no solution at all.

**For far more detail on this subject than I intend to give here, please consult THE WEIGHTING GAME, F & SF, April 1962.*

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The basic trouble, you see, with atomic weights as a guide for element arrangement is that there is no way of knowing when the list is complete. It happens that the atomic weight of carbon is 12, of nitrogen 14 and of oxygen 16. How can you be sure that there are not some as yet undiscovered elements with atomic weights of 13 and 15? The entire table might be thrown out of whack simply because missing elements are not included.

You might argue, of course, that a difference of 2 in atomic weight was as close as elements are likely to get, but you can't be certain of that. Nickel has an atomic weight of 58.7 and cobalt one of 58.9. With such atomic weight differences there would be room for nine elements between carbon and nitrogen and nine more between nitrogen and oxygen.

The fact of the matter is simply that atomic weights are not enough. Some other quantitative properties are required and, best of all, some properties which can be presented only as integers, so that if you get a 1 and a 2 and a 3, you know there can be nothing in between.

The beginning of the breakthrough came in 1852. An English chemist, Edward Frankland, took note of the fact that in the chemical formulas that were being worked out, an atom of a particular element seemed always to combine with a fixed number of other elements.

Thus, a hydrogen atom never combined with more than one other atom. It could be assigned a combining power (or "valence" from a Latin word meaning "power") of 1. An oxygen atom could combine with two hydrogen atoms, a nitrogen atom with three and a carbon atom with four, so that oxygen, nitrogen and carbon had valences of 2, 3, and 4 respectively. These valences worked out very nicely. Thus a carbon atom (valence, 4) could combine with two oxygen atoms (2 + 2) or with one oxygen atom and two hydrogen atoms (2 + 1 + 1.)

The valence concept not only had the virtue of simplicity and of clear-and-evident usefulness, it also offered the required integral property, for there seemed no possibility of valences of 1.5 or 2.32 or anything like that.*

In 1869, the Russian chemist, Dmitri Ivanovich Mendeléev, tried arranging the elements according to molecular weight *and* valence. The result was a table of which I will present a very simplified and incom-

Actually, 20th Century sophistication introduced new concepts of valence that did indeed involve something like fractional values, but that does not affect the line of argument in this article.

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plete version (see Table 1) with the atomic weights given to one decimal place.

Table 1 — The Valence Elements

Valence	*Period 1*	*Period 2*	*Period 3*	*Period 4*	*Period 5*	*Period 6*	*Period 7*
1		Li (6.9)	Na (23.0)	K (39.1)	Rb (85.5)	Cs (132.9)	Fr* (223)
2		Be (9.0)	Mg (24.3)	Ca (40.0) #	Sr (87.6) #	Ba (137.3) #	Ra* (226)
3		B (10.8)	Al (27.0)	Ga* (69.7)	In (114.8)	Tl (204.4)	
4		C (12.0)	Si (28.1)	Ge* (72.6)	Sn (118.7)	Pb (207.2)	
3		N (14.0)	P (31.0)	As (74.9)	Sb (121.8)	Bi (209.0)	
2		O (16.0)	S (32.0)	Se (79.0)	Te (127.6)	Po* (210)	
1	H (1.0)	F* (19.0)	Cl (35.5)	Br (79.9)	I (126.9)	At* (210)	
0	He* (4.0)	Ne* (20.2)	Ar* (39.9)	Kr* (83.8)	Xe* (131.3)	Rn* (222)	

In Table 1, I am using the chemical symbols for the elements in order to save space, but that doesn't affect the argument or in any way confuse it even if you don't know what elements the symbols stand for.† When I have to mention a particular element, however, I will give the full name as well as the symbol.

The rows in Table 1 do indeed contain closely knit element families. For instance, the top row contains lithium (Li), sodium (Na), potassium (K), rubidium (Rb), cesium (Cs) and francium (Fr), which all have very similar properties. All are low-melting, exceedingly active metals which, under given chemical conditions, react in nearly identical fashion. What's more, where differences do exist, they show a steady gradation as one goes across the row. Moving from lithium to sodium to potassium and so on, we find that the melting point gets progressively

†*See, however, THE SYMBOL-MINDED CHEMIST, F & SF, December 1966.*

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lower and the activity progressively higher. These six are the "alkali metals."

The second row contains six "alkaline earth metals" which are also similar among themselves, and so on.

Notice that in Period 5, tellurium (Te) comes before iodine (I), even though tellurium has the larger atomic weight and therefore ought to come after iodine if atomic weight were the sole criterion.

It was one of Mendeléev's great decisions to place questions of valence (and chemical properties in general) ahead of that of atomic weight. In order to place tellurium and iodine in the proper family with the proper valence, the atomic weight order had to be inverted. The more sophisticated knowledge of atomic structure gained by later chemists proved that in this respect Mendeléev's intuition was absolutely correct.

As one goes down the list of elements according to molecular weight, a particular set of properties turns up periodically; therefore the listing, when arranged so that those particular sets fall into neat rows or columns, is called a "periodic table."

At the time Mendeléev first advanced the periodic table, a number of the elements given in Table 1 were not yet discovered. These are indicated in Table 1 by asterisks.

As an example, the six elements in the bottom row, helium (He), neon (Ne), argon (Ar), krypton (Kr), xenon (Xe), and radon (Rn) were all unknown in 1869. Their existence was utterly unsuspected, and the periodic table seemed complete without them. As one goes up the list of atomic weights, the valence change in the elements listed in Table 1 (minus the bottom row) would be 1,1,2,3,4,3,2,1,1,2,3,4,3,2,1,1,2, and so on.

When the bottom-row elements were discovered, however, it was found that they did not combine with any other elements and therefore had a valence of 0.* The valence change was therefore, 1,0,1,2,3,4,3, 2,1,0,1,2,3,4,3,2,1,0,1,2 and so on.

The bottom-row elements, all very similar in properties and called the "inert gases" or the "noble gases" therefore extend the table without upsetting it. Quite the contrary, the insertion of a 0 in the proper place makes the periodic table even more elegant. The fact that an unsuspected group of elements should so remarkably fit and beautify a periodic table invented without them is extraordinary evidence in favor of the validity of Mendeléev's concept.

**Exceptions to this general rule were discovered in the 1960s, but these are exceptions. The valence of 0 under ordinary conditions stands.*

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Notice that in order to keep argon (Ar) in its right place in the inert gas family it has to be put ahead of potassium (K) even though that inverts the molecular weight order. Again, this turned out to be the Right Thing to do.

Notice also that in Table 1 the five elements with the highest atomic weights were undiscovered in Mendeléev's time. These are polonium (Po), astatine (At), radon (Rn), francium (Fr) and radium (Ra). These were discovered in the 1890s and afterward and are examples of radioactive elements. All are unstable and exist in the earth's crust in vanishingly small quantities. Since these are all at the end of the table, their absence does not affect the remainder.

Then there is Fluorine (F), which, strictly speaking, was not known in Mendeléev's time. It is a special case, however. Compounds of fluorine were known, and the element is a member of so tightly-knit a family that its existence and properties were certain, based on the knowledge of those compounds. It was just that fluorine held on so tightly to other elements that it wasn't till 1886 that chemists could break it away and study it in its elemental form.* Actually, it was included in the table from the start (just as the North and South Pole could be placed on 19th Century globes of the Earth even though no one had yet reached them).

That left the two elements gallium (Ga) and germanium (Ge). These weren't at the end of the table either in the sense of being in the last column or in the bottom row so that they couldn't be left out without affecting the rest of the table. Their existence, unlike that of fluorine, was completely unsuspected, and they left "holes" in the table.

This means that if you try to list the elements in order of atomic weight and disregard gallium and germanium, you would be forced to place arsenic (As) on the right of aluminum (Al), selenium (Se) on the right of silicon (Si) and so on. This would utterly upset the family and valence arrangements.

Mendeléev refused to do that and that was the greatest of his contributions. He put arsenic (As) to the right of phosphorus (P), and selenium (Se) to the right of sulfur (S) where they belonged by every criterion of properties. Since that left two holes to the right of aluminum (Al) and silicon (Si), he calmly decided that they represented two elements that remained yet to be discovered. He called them "eka-aluminum" and "eka-silicon" respectively; the "eka" being the Sanskrit word for "one." The missing elements were one place to the right of aluminum and silicon, respectively, in other words.

*See DEATH IN THE LABORATORY, F & SF, September 1965.

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What's more, Mendeléev predicted the properties of the missing elements in great detail by assuming that gallium (Ga) would have properties midway between aluminum (Al) and indium (In) and that germanium (Ge) would have properties midway between silicon (Si) and tin (Sn).

On the whole, chemists smiled indulgently at the mad Russian, but in 1875 gallium was discovered and in 1886 germanium was discovered and Mendeléev's predictions checked out in every respect. Chemists stopped laughing.

Does this mean that the periodic table as so far described is perfect?

Alas, no. The version of the periodic table presented in Table 1 contains just forty-four elements, yet there are many more than that number. Such well-known elements as gold, silver, copper, iron, platinum, manganese and tungsten (all perfectly familiar in Mendeléev's time) find no place in the periodic table in the form presented in Table 1.

Must the periodic table be thrown out then, or can space be found for the additional elements?

Well, notice the three places I have marked with a # mark. Between calcium (Ca) and gallium (Ga) there is an atomic weight difference of 29.7; between strontium (Sr) and indium (In) a difference of 27.2; and between barium (Ba) and thallium (Tl) a difference of fully 67.1. These differences are much larger than exist anywhere else in the periodic table. Indeed, if these three intervals are disregarded, then the average difference in atomic weight from element to element in all the rest of the table is only 2.5.

If we accept 2.5 as the average atomic weight difference between adjoining elements throughout the table, then there is room for twelve elements between calcium (Ca) and gallium (Ga), for eleven between strontium (Sr) and indium (In) and for no less than twenty-seven between barium (Ba) and thallium (Tl).

Is this possible?

Yes, it is, if we get it through our heads that the periods in the periodic table need not necessarily be all the same length (as some of the early speculators had assumed) but could grow longer as one went down the list of elements.

In Mendeléev's time, for instance, the first period had only one member, hydrogen (H), while Periods 2 and 3 had seven members apiece. A generation later, when the inert gases were discovered, it turned out that the first period contained two elements and the second and third periods eight apiece. (There has been no change since.)

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Why, then, could not the later periods jump to twenty or even to thirty or more?

Indeed, in Mendeléev's time, no less than nine elements were known with atomic weights between those of calcium (Ca) and gallium (Ga), elements that would therefore serve to bridge that large atomic weight gap. Similarly, there were nine elements that would contribute toward a bridging of the gap between strontium (Sr) and indium (In).

The trouble was that valence was no longer as paramount and clear a phenomenon among those elements within the gap as in the elements of Table 1. The elements bridged the gap from one with a clear valence of 2 to one with a clear valence of 3; from calcium (Ca) to gallium (Ga) in the first case and from strontium (Sr) to indium (In) in the second and because they represented a kind of transition from 2 to 3, they can be called the "transition elements." For purposes of this article, I will call the elements of Table 1 the "valence elements."

We can be guided in arranging the transition elements partly by molecular weight, partly by less clear-cut valence properties, and partly by other chemical properties. In doing so, we can take the eighteen known elements of the first two gaps (as of 1869) and arrange them as in Table 2.

There is no real doubt about the arrangement. It is clear, for instance, that silver (Ag) must be to the right of copper (Cu) and that cadmium (Cd) must be to the right of zinc (Zn) out of overwhelmingly convincing chemical considerations. So with the others. Only with the arrangement indicated do properties match left and right—and they do so in the proper order of atomic weight, except for cobalt (Co) and nickel (Ni). There, in order to preserve the chemical verities, the atomic weight order must be inverted, but the atomic weights are so close to each other that the inversion is a rather venal fault. (This is the third—and last—case of an inverted atomic weight order in the periodic table.)

With the eighteen transition elements of Periods 4 and 5 arranged as in Table 2, two holes are found to exist. One is to the left of yttrium (Y), and the other to the right of manganese (Mn). Mendeléev chose the hole to the left of yttrium (Y) as still a third place where he could predict the existence of an undiscovered element, complete with all its properties. (He called it "eka-boron" because in his first version of the table, he placed the hole to the right of boron (B).)

He was borne out in 1879, when scandium was discovered.* Its sym-

*See *THE MULTIPLYING ELEMENTS, F & SF, February, 1970.*

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Table 2 — The Transition Elements

Valence			*Period 4*	*Period 5*
2			Ca (40.1)	Sr (87.6)
	Transition Elements	*a*		Y (88.9)
		b	Ti (47.9)	Zr (91.2)
		c	V (50.9)	Nb (92.9)
		d	Cr (52.0)	Mo (95.9)
		e	Mn (54.9)	
		f	Fe (55.8)	Ru (101.7)
		g	Co (58.9)	Rh (102.9)
		h	Ni (58.7)	Pd (106.4)
		i	Cu (63.6)	Ag (107.9)
		j	Zn (65.4)	Cd (112.4)
3			Ga (69.7)	In (114.8)

bol is Sc, and its atomic weight is 45.0, fitting it snugly between calcium (Ca) and titanium (Ti).

The hole to the right of manganese (Mn) was not so easily filled. Indeed the element that fits there was not discovered until 1937. It was named technetium (Tc, atomic weight 99).

The atomic weight gaps between the transition elements (assuming ten apiece in Periods 4 and 5, counting the two holes) were about right. The atomic weight differences averaged out to 2.6 as compared with 2.5 for the valence elements.

Could one be sure, in the absence of overriding valence considerations, however, that there might not be eleven elements in each of the two series of transition elements, or even twelve? Suppose, for in-

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stance, there was an element missing between *c* and *d* in each of the two series. If an element was missing between *c* and *d* in only one of the series, we could see the hole it made from the presence of the equivalent element in the other series (as in the case of the hole to the left of yttrium, for instance), but if *both* series were lacking at the same point, we couldn't tell. (That was the case of the inert gases, for when the entire series was unknown, its existence was unsuspected. As soon as one of them was discovered, the others appeared as holes, were searched for and found.)

An argument in favor of ten as the correct number for the transition elements arises from the fact that the total number of elements in Period 4 and Period 5, valence plus transition is 18, and this introduces an interesting regularity. That is, the total number of elements in Period 1 is $2 \times 1^2 = 2$; the total number in Period 2 and in Period 3 is $2 \times 2^2 = 8$; and the total number in Period 4 and in Period 5 is $2 \times 3^2 = 18$.

This is pretty, and to a person with my bent for numbers, for instance, it is even convincing; but actually, what have the elements to do with this neat arrangement? There was no theory at any time during the 19th Century that would account for such a relationship, and it might well be nothing more than a misleading coincidence.

So chemists couldn't be *sure,* and the periodic table, though a valuable guide, remained rickety.

Next, what about the third series of transition elements, the ones which must bridge the particularly large atomic weight gap between barium (Ba) and thallium (Tl)? In that gap, in Mendeléev's time, there were eleven elements known. If we try to make them match the other two series of transition elements in the *a* to *j* scheme, we end up with Table 3.

The elements shown in Table 3 match up indubitably with those in Table 2. Thus gold (Au) is clearly in position *i* to the right of copper (Cu) and silver (Ag), and the rest of the elements shown belong in their places with equal clarity.

This leaves two holes, though. In position *c* there ought to be an element to the right of zirconium (Zr), and in 1923 that element was indeed discovered. It was named hafnium (Hf, atomic weight 178.5) and was discovered in zirconium ores. It fit the place perfectly, too perfectly. It took so long to discover hafnium not because that element was excessively rare, but because it was so like zirconium in all its properties that it was difficult to separate it from its fifty-fold more common twin sister.

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Table 3 — More Transition Elements

Valence			*Period* 6
2			Ba (137.3)
	Transition elements	*a*	La (138.9)
		b	
		c	Ta (180.9)
		d	W (183.9)
		e	
		f	Os (190.2)
		g	Ir (192.2)
		h	Pt (195.1)
		i	Au (197.0)
		j	Hg (200.6)
3			Tl (204.4)

The hole in position *e* was filled in 1925 with the discovery of rhenium (Re, molecular weight 186.2).

There was no element discovered in the third transition series which indicated the existence of unsuspected holes in the first or second transition series. That was a point in favor of supposing the ten elements in each of those first two series to be all there were.

But even allowing for the discovery of hafnium (Hf), you will notice that there is a sizable atomic weight gap between that and lanthanum (La), a gap of 39.6. This gap exists between *a* and *b* of period 6, and there is no such gap at all in the corresponding position of period 4 or period 5. There is room for a number of elements in this gap.

Yet I said that there were eleven elements known in Mendeléev's time with atomic weights lying between those of barium (Ba) and

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thallium (Tl). Table 3 only accounted for eight of them. What of the other three?

Those other three have atomic weights that do indeed fall in the new gap between lanthanum (La) and hafnium (Hf), and they are cerium (Ce), erbium (Er) and terbium (Tb).

These are three of the rare-earth metals which I discussed in last month's article. Two others were known at the time: lanthanum (La) and yttrium (Y), and still another was shortly discovered, scandium (Sc). Scandium, lanthanum and yttrium, however, all fit into position *a* of Periods 4, 5, and 6 respectively and are ordinary transition elements. It is only cerium, erbium and terbium that are to be placed in this special gap in Period 6. By 1907, ten more rare earth elements were located with atomic weights that placed them in this special gap. The list of thirteen are present in Table 4.

Table 4 — Rare Earth Elements

Period 6

a — Lanthanum (La) (138.9)		
	Cerium (Ce)	140.1
	Praseodymium (Pr)	140.9
	Neodymium (Nd)	144.2
	Samarium (Sm)	150.4
	Europium (Eu)	152.0
	Gadolinium (Gd)	157.3
	Terbium (Tb)	158.9
	Dysprosium (Dy)	162.5
	Holmium (Ho)	164.9
	Erbium (Er)	167.3
	Thulium (Tm)	168.9
	Ytterbium (Yb)	173.0
	Lutetium (Lu)	175.0
b — Hafnium (Hf) (178.5)		

How many more might there be?

Suppose we go back to the number game I introduced a little while ago. The same system that explains the numbers 2, 8, 8, 18, 18 for the first five periods would make the total number of elements in the sixth period $2 \times 4^2 = 32$. Since the valence elements and transition elements together in the sixth period make up 18, that would leave 14 rare-earth elements to bridge the gap and add up to 32.

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We have 13; where would we find the 14th?

Between neodymium (Nd) and samarium (Sm) there is an atomic weight difference of 6.2, over twice the normal value. It might be there. However, the difference between europium (Eu) and gadolinium (Gd) is 5.3 and that between thulium (Tm) and ytterbium (Yb) is 4.1. Perhaps there are three missing rare earth elements, one in each place, or, who knows, even more. We can't after all bind ourselves too firmly to a pretty numerical relationship in the absence of physical evidence that would explain its existence.

In short, forty years after Mendeléev had presented the periodic table of the elements, it remained incomplete. Despite the enormous triumphs it had achieved and the neat manner in which it had solved almost every problem it had faced, chemists could not be sure it would remain an adequate guide under all conditions. In particular, they could not be sure it could account, adequately, for the rare earth elements.

It was for this reason, more than any other, that chemists anxiously combed through the rare-earth minerals to see how many new elements they could indubitably identify. By doing so they might bring the entire periodic table down with a crash.

—They didn't. Instead, in 1914, the periodic table was placed on a firm, logical footing at last, and that happened in an utterly unexpected way through a line of research that seemed to have nothing to do with chemistry. We'll track that down next month.

(*Books, from p. 47*)

Hodgson's Carnacki, Mycroft & Moran have published NUMBER SEVEN QUEER STREET ($4.00) in order to introduce Margery Lawrence's Miles Pennoyer. Pennoyer is in the grand, unabashed tradition of the British psychic detective. He belongs to the best clubs, dwells in a comfortable bachelor apartment overlooking the Thames, permits himself only the occasional fine Havana lest tobacco damp his occult abilities, and engages in constant and remorseless battle with the powers of evil. His Watson, Jerome Latimer, himself a gentleman of impeccable credentials, does not rush the telling of his friend's adventures, but has the sense to present them in the thoughtful and leisurely fashion they demand. Not that there are not some very spooky moments in these tales, mind, but we know always that the keen mind and stout, kindly heart of Miles Pennoyer will triumph over even the most determined ghost or villain. Highly recommended to those who have the good sense to enjoy this sort of thing.

—GAHAN WILSON

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"I'm afraid this simulator test indicates Commodore Brent would be a poor choice for the Lunar Expedition."

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We have not yet been able to find out anything about Charles Miller, except that he is a new writer and, as evidenced by the story below, a very talented one. The story has a university background, and its narrative moves from the sort of cocktail-party fascination with the occult, especially witchcraft, into something very different and convincing and frightening.

THE TANGLED WEB OF NEIL WEAVER

by Charles Miller

THIS IS WHAT WEAVER dreamed:

Brilliant light, sourceless but overwhelming, blinded him wherever he looked, so that he caught only glimpses of upthrust peaks of ice, so jagged and geometrical that conventional gravity could have nothing to do with their formation or ability to sustain themselves. Giant crevasses yawned open across the ice, their sides polished crystalline sheets, their depths deteriorating into mist. Something was wrong, he thought; there ought to be a wind to go with an effect like this. Instead the silence was profound.

Even as he reminded himself that he was dreaming, that all he had to do was wake up, he knew it was not a dream. In some impossible sense it was more real than anything he'd ever known. The only way it differed from reality was his helplessness. He had no will. He tried to turn aside, to walk out into the plain he glimpsed to his left, but could not. With no sense of volition, without even awareness of his legs carrying him, he found he couldn't leave the edge of the crevasse along which he moved.

Then he heard a sound overhead: a great rush of wings, a harsh cry that might have been a laugh or the call of some bird of prey. Again he wanted to look up but could not. Helplessly he con-

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tinued moving while the sound faded, then grew again, rushing upon him.

With no sensation of falling, he was lying down. A long spear of ice pierced his right side. It entered between the ribs, just under his breast, and came out between the right shoulder blade and spine. Unable to move, he simply hung impaled. The ice was a flattened triangle, each opposed edge bladed to razor sharpness. The cold ran through him like electricity, a burning agony in his right lung.

Again the wings rushed, again he heard the cry.

Then he was awake.

The room was dark. He heard Hughes, his roommate, snoring gently on the other bed. Sweat burst from him. He caught his breath to scream (it was an act of volition—he seized on it with something like hunger), but the pain in his right side froze him helpless. Drawing his knees against his chest, he rolled over to ease the pain.

"Hughes, Hughes." His lips moved, but his voice was only a whisper.

When he looked toward Hughes' bed, to see if he'd been heard, he saw something standing in the dark. It was a figure, tall and indistinct, but he knew it was a woman. Pressing his hand against his side made the pain recede.

"Who are you?" he asked, his voice still contorted.

There was no answer, but the figure moved slightly, as though the sound of his voice had been enough to dislodge it.

"Who are you?" Weaver felt his voice becoming stronger. "Get the hell out of here," he said, as loud as he could, and this time the figure vanished.

On the other bed Hughes snorted and sat up.

"What's that? Is that you, Neil?"

"Help me, Fred," Weaver called.

"What?" But he saw Hughes getting out of bed, going to the light switch beside the door. "Christ, what's going on? It's cold as hell in here."

Weaver had met Cynthia Collins through Hughes. There was to be a party at a house in town which a couple of girls were renting. Hughes' girl, Fran, knew one of the girls, so he had an invitation; he urged Weaver to go with them.

"It might be fun. Some of them are very far-out-type chicks."

It was a small, white frame house in a shabby residential neighborhood; on either side were vacant lots. Inside the furniture looked as though it had come out of basements or attics or secondhand stores. The rug on the living room floor was worn but reasonably clean, with more people seated on it than on the sofa and the

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chairs around the walls. A few psychedelic posters had been hung, and there was a large chart of the signs of the zodiac.

The subject of conversation, Weaver gathered on his way to the kitchen for a drink, was astrology. Mentally he yawned.

In the sink was a dishpan full of punch to which Hughes added a pint of gin, their contribution to the party. Weaver filled a chipped coffee cup and wandered out on the back porch, trying to locate an unattached girl. There was no one on the porch, and in the gathering darkness the yard appeared empty. Back in the living room he found two girls had established themselves in an unoccupied corner with a Ouija board.

Hughes, catching his eye, nodded in their direction.

It was obvious which one he meant. "Oh, Cynthia," the other girl was complaining, "it's just moving around, it's not spelling anything. This is silly."

"Give it a little more time," Cynthia said patiently. "Don't try to rush it. It takes a while for the spirit to be able to work through us."

Weaver had always liked the name Cynthia; it seemed somehow very feminine and full of promise. He sat down against the wall beside the plain girl where he could watch Cynthia. Her little-girl-length skirt was hiked up her long thighs. Black hair, drawn into a knot at the nape of her neck, made her pale face appear sharp-featured, the nose and chin long. The mouth, though, was wide and full-lipped; lovely, Neil decided.

The other girl was impatient. "Oh, Cynthia!"

"Let me try," Weaver offered.

"Have you ever worked one before?" Cynthia wanted to know, but the other girl saw a chance to escape and scooted aside. Weaver took her place, resting the board across his knees. He put his fingers lightly on the heart-shaped pointer, letting them touch Cynthia's until she frowned and shook her head.

"I've worked it with my mother," Weaver said, "and with my aunt."

Cynthia disregarded this. "Are you there, Ouija?"

The pointer swung round and round the board, then suddenly moved to "Yes", paused, and moved away.

"Oh!" said the plain girl, who had taken Weaver's place against the wall. "One of you pushed it!"

"It wasn't me," Weaver said.

"No we didn't," Cynthia said, "I could tell. We're in touch with the spirit, we can work together." She rewarded Weaver with a smile.

Later they went in the kitchen to replenish their coffee cups at the dishpan, then out on the back porch. It was quite dark now and the air felt cool. A Rolling Stones album thundered through the

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front part of the house. From somewhere in the neighborhood they could hear the stuttering rush of a lawn sprinkler.

"You've got to meet my roommate, Carmine," Cynthia said. "She thinks of the most amazing things to ask it, and she gets the strangest answers. We found out about the whole Ted Kennedy thing months ago. It really gives you the feeling you're in touch with things."

They sat down on the worn cement steps. The punch, Weaver noted with approval, had become much stronger since his first cup.

"My mother and aunt are very good at it," he told her. "My aunt, especially. She can do automatic writing, and takes down poetry. Sometimes I've seen her in a trance where a completely different voice speaks through her. I've heard her speak foreign languages, and the only language she knows is English."

"How'd you know it wasn't just sounds she was making?"

"I know some French, enough to follow what she said one time. And another time I taped the whole thing and then let a guy I know, who speaks Greek, hear it. At first he said he couldn't understand, but then he thought it might be a dialect. So we took it to an uncle of his, who knows some of the dialects, and he said she was speaking pure Attic Greek, the kind they talk in Homer."

Cynthia's voice was respectful. "What was she saying?"

"Well, the uncle didn't follow Attic Greek too well himself. As near as we could make out, though, it was the spirit of a Greek warrior who'd been killed at Syracuse."

"Do you still have the tape? I'd love to hear it sometime. I know Carmine would, too."

"It's at home. I'll bring it up next time so you can listen, if you'd like."

He took their cups into the kitchen. Hughes was at the dishpan, sampling the contents of his cup. "We'd better get some more fruit juice in this stuff; it's pure gin."

"Wait'll I get mine before you start tampering."

"How're you doing? Didn't I tell you she was a far-out chick?"

Weaver scraped the bottom of the dishpan refilling the cups. "She can be handled."

This time he sat on the step below Cynthia as he resumed the stories of his aunt's prowess. Cynthia wanted to hear some of the poetry she'd taken down, so with the gin swimming in his brain Weaver rhymed freely.

"The bridge to the future lies through the past;
The eagle mounts on the wings of the wind;
The mountains are mighty, the desert is vast:
Have faith in the present, it works its own end."

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Cynthia leaned against a porch support with a sigh. Casually Weaver began stroking the calf of her leg and the underside of her knee. She asked him to quote the poem again, and he managed to do so without changing it much. He was debating whether to go for more punch or trust to the quantity she'd drunk when another girl emerged from the kitchen.

"Come on, Cynthia. It's time."

"Oh, Karen," Cynthia protested.

Karen was a dark, skinny, intense girl. "Don't you want to? Louise is changing now. You promised you would if Carmine wasn't here."

Cynthia stood up, forcing Weaver to release her leg. "Do you know Neil?" she asked.

"No. Come on, if you're going to. I've got to tell Louise."

"All right," Cynthia said. "I'll be there in a minute. I agreed to be part of a performance," she explained to Weaver, "so I have to change."

"You're not leaving?"

"No, it'll just be in the front room. Maybe I can meet you afterward."

Weaver found Hughes and Fran seated against the front room wall on the carpet, which had been rolled aside to leave the floor bare. Fran gave him a glassy-eyed smile as he sat down.

"What's going on?" Neil asked.

Hughes shook his head. "They're going to put on some kind of magic act or something. You want to stick around?"

"I better. My chick's part of the act."

Karen came out of a bedroom off the living room dressed in an ankle-length black gown. Her hair, which on the porch had been pulled back from her face, now hung loose. Her feet were bare, and something about the way she carried herself made Neil suspect she was naked under the gown.

"Please," she said, "may we have silence?"

"Why not?" Hughes whispered to Fran, who giggled.

Karen toured the room, turning out the lamps, until the only light came down the hall from the kitchen. Several girls cried out. Weaver saw Hughes kissing Fran.

"Please!" Karen said, and went back in the bedroom.

After a brief wait the bedroom door opened and Karen, followed by Cynthia and the third girl, came out. All of them wore the black gowns and their hair loose, their feet bare. Each of them carried a lighted candle in a small black holder to a coffee table. While Karen and Louise bowed, touching their foreheads to the floor, Cynthia lit a stick of incense, which began smoking immediately, and put it in a dish.

Cynthia returned to the bedroom. Karen began drawing a large five-pointed star on the bare floor in charcoal, so that she and

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Louise were in the middle. When Cynthia rejoined them, she carried a large metal scrub bucket in one hand and a live chicken, upside down, in the other. Its legs were bound together, its wings hung loose. Every now and then it gave a low, contemplative squawk.

Cynthia joined them in the circle, kneeling, and Karen chanted:

"Oh, Prince Lucifer! Be propitious. Bring it to pass that we may witness your divine presence here among us this night. Leave your abode, my great lord, in whatever region of the Earth it may be, to come and speak to us. With prayer and sacrifice your devoted servants await your coming!"

At this all three of them rose, Louise with the bucket, Cynthia with the chicken held aloft, and Karen with a short, hooked knife, like a linoleum knife, its edge gleaming in the candlelight. Several of the girls seated around the room gasped, anticipating what was going to happen.

"Come forth instanter!" Karen cried, "by the great words of our pact: vaycheon stimulamaton y ezpares retragrammaton, soter Emanuel Saboot Adonai, te adoro et invoco! Blood for the Master!"

Grasping the chicken's head, she drew the neck taut and cut it with a single swift stroke.

Several girls screamed as blood spurted from the stump. The chicken flooped against Cynthia's grasp, the wings jerking convulsively. Cynthia shoved the bird into the waiting bucket, holding it until the death spasm ended. Then the three girls dipped their fingers in the blood and moved around the room, marking an X on the foreheads of everyone present.

When Karen approached them, Fran moaned and shrank back. Hughes shook his head, no, he did not want them marked. Karen didn't insist, but quickly touched Weaver's forehead before returning to the circle.

"We await thy coming!" she cried.

Weaver was not sure how long it had been there, but he saw a large toad on the table between the candles. The swollen, low-slung body was mud-colored and covered with lumps; in the candlelight its eyes gleamed like jewels.

Fran buried her face against Hughes' side. Weaver, looking at him, saw him wink, though his face seemed pale.

In the circle the three girls had prostrated themselves, their foreheads touching the floor. Karen raised her head, arching her back to lean forward with her weight on her hands, pursing her lips. Her eyes were closed.

Beside him Weaver was aware of the door opening, though he paid no attention until a voice called, "What's going on here?"

His first thought was that the landlady was objecting to the way her house was being used. The

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three girls scrambled to their feet. The one who had entered—Weaver saw she was no older than the rest of them—hurried to the table and blew out the candles with a breath. The toad had disappeared. In the near darkness the newcomer snatched up the bowl of incense and the bucket with the butchered chicken and carried them into the bedroom. Wordlessly the other girls followed her.

Weaver heard the whispered explanation: "It's Carmine."

He waited, but it was nearly half an hour before the four girls emerged from the bedroom. The party was breaking up. The punch was gone, and Hughes had taken Fran back to the girls' dormitory to have some time with her before she had to be in at midnight.

When he finally caught Cynthia alone, she was carrying an overnight case.

"Can I take you home?" he asked.

"Not tonight. We're going with Carmine."

"When can I see you again?"

"Do you still want to, after tonight?" But she smiled. "Call me tomorrow, we can talk then. Carmine's ready to go."

"I thought you wanted me to meet her?"

"I don't think tonight's a good time."

Before Cynthia could leave, Carmine joined them. "Who are you talking to, dear?"

Cynthia introduced them.

Carmine was a dark, fat girl with flaccid breasts and big, meaty thighs. Her dark hair was pulled back in the old-fashioned bun Weaver had noticed being worn by a number of girls lately. More hair darkened her upper lip, and Neil was unable to prevent himself from imagining the condition of her armpits and crotch.

He noticed Carmine's eyes widen, as though she were reading his thoughts. He tried to smile, but the idea unnerved him. She extended a clammy hand that refused to be let go of, once he'd taken it.

"I suppose you had a good laugh tonight?" she asked.

"Oh, no," Cynthia said. "Neil's not like that. He's had experiences of his own."

Carmine still held his hand. "For example?"

With a glance at Cynthia, Neil shook his head.

"Cat got your tongue?" Carmine insisted.

He took her hand with his left hand and pulled hers away firmly. "I—I believe it's too important for idle conversation, that's all."

"Apparently you told Cynthia. I assume, though, that it's my conversation you find idle."

She moved toward the door.

"You should have told her some of the things you told me," Cynthia whispered. "You've hurt her feelings."

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"Come along, Cynthia," Carmine said, as she left.

"What'd you think of that Cynthia chick?" Hughes asked the next day.

Weaver admitted he was not sure what to think.

"She may be sick, but she can be had," Hughes encouraged him. "With a chick like that you got to play to her weakness."

"I was doing all right till Carmine showed up. She's going to queer my act."

"Cut Cynthia loose," Hughes advised.

That night, after some delay, Weaver learned her room number and got her on the phone. She was willing to talk, but claimed she was too busy to meet him. When he phoned again the next night, it was the same story. He had gone to the library, to look up some books on witchcraft, but though there were a number of titles listed in the card catalogue, there was nothing on the shelves. He finally asked the librarian, a small white-haired woman with pink skin and a chronic whisper.

"We can't keep them on the shelves," she gasped. "And it's not the boys, it's the girls. They don't check them out, they steal them. I can't understand it."

"It's pretty strong stuff, once you get into it," Weaver suggested. "And it really turns the chicks on."

"Well," the old woman hissed, "I'd like to turn a few of those chicks over my knee."

Cynthia had mentioned again the tape he claimed to have of his aunt speaking Attic Greek in the voice of an ancient warrier. Weaver told her he was going home to get it that night. Instead, he made a tape of Hughes, who had taken Greek in high school and remembered enough to pronounce the words, reading a passage from the *Iliad*.

It came out too clear to be very impressive, so he set up the recorder in the hall and had Hughes read the passage again in a garbled, hesitant voice, muffled behind his hand. This version was more impressive.

When he phoned Cynthia again, he told her he'd brought the tape from home. She was anxious to hear it. They arranged to meet that night, though she warned him she could not stay out late. Weaver borrowed Hughes' car, packed the recorder, and picked up Cynthia at her dormitory.

It was still early, and Cynthia seemed in no particular hurry to hear the tape. He noticed she'd brought her overnight case, which she put in the back seat. He drove out of town, circling around some of the back roads. Finally he parked on a bluff overlooking the river. From a fallen log, they watched the last sunlight through the clouds, then walked hand in hand along the bluff.

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Stars were coming out in the eastern sky. Fireflies gleamed softly under the trees.

"This is nice," Cynthia said. "It's been a long time since I've been out like this. I'd almost forgotten how nice it could be."

But when he tried to kiss her, she pulled away.

They returned to the car to hear the tape. He played it, then at her request played it again, but somehow it seemed less impressive than he'd hoped.

"We'd better leave," Cynthia said. "I've got to be back by nine."

In town she directed him to a small house not far from the girls' dormitory. It was dark, the lawn unkempt. Along the front and one side he could see tall bushes.

Cynthia leaned toward him to be kissed good-night. Weaver expected no more than a touch of her lips; instead the kiss was long, lingering, only reluctantly ended. When he reached for her, she intercepted his hand, but after holding it for a moment, she guided it to her breast.

They arranged to meet later at a coffee shop. She said she would be finished before eleven, and wouldn't have to be at the dormitory until twelve. Then, taking the overnight case she ran up the brick walk to the house and went in without knocking.

Weaver drove to the corner and turned into the next street, parked and walked up the alley.

When he located the house, it was as dark from the back as it had been from the front. The air was so still he could hear cars pass on a street several blocks away. He let himself through a gate in the fence. The backyard was as badly overgrown in grass and weeds as the yard in front. The only lights he could see were in houses further down the block. The back door was shut, the screen door latched.

He followed the brick walk beside the house before he heard a sound. At first he could not place it—the deep, regular beat might have been mistaken for some kind of machinery in the distance—then he recognized it as a drum. Either it was a very good stereo system, he decided or someone was actually beating one.

There was a single window on this side of the house. The sound was coming from the room inside, but the window was dark. Then he heard the chanting begin, from at least half a dozen voices, only so distant and muffled he knew something must be hung in front of the window on the inside. Looking closer, he made out the folds of a blanket.

He began smelling the incense that had been burned at the party. He could imagine the scene: the five-pointed star on the floor, the candles and incense, the kneeling girls in their black robes. He was listening for the sound of the chicken when he recognized Car-

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mine's voice rising above the chant. "Emanuel Saboot Adonai!"

The beating drum increased in tempo, the chanting took on a note of hysteria. Abruptly it stopped.

Weaver found his heart beating rapidly. He could hardly breathe, he was covered with sweat. The blanket in front of the window was thrown aside, and he was framed in light. A dozen girls in black gowns stood watching him. At the window, hands outstretched to hold the blanket, stood Carmine. Her face, separated by the glass, was not a foot from his own. He was too startled to move. She stared at him a long moment, then gave a triumphant laugh and jerked the blanket back in place.

He was left standing in darkness.

At the coffee shop, Weaver wondered whether Cynthia would come or not. He knew he'd spoiled any chance he might have had to placate Carmine; he only hoped he hadn't ruined his chances with Cynthia, too.

It was after eleven when she came in carrying her overnight case. Her hair was pulled back by a white ribbon; her face looked freshly washed. She sat beside him in the booth.

"Two coffees," he told the waitress.

A rank, musky odor that was not simply the incense clung to Cynthia.

"What's that smell?"

"Something we drink. Carmine makes it out of herbs and things. It's part of the ceremony."

"Does it taste as bad as it smells?"

"It does at first. After that—I don't know, it's not so bad."

Weaver watched her stir sugar into her coffee twice. When she tasted it, she had to ask the waitress for another cup.

"What happened after I left?" Weaver grinned to see if he could make a joke of it.

"Nothing. Carmine stopped everything. We washed up and the others left. Carmine wanted to talk to me."

"What did she do? Straighten you out about me?"

"I guess so." Cynthia looked at him curiously. "She told me to be careful. She said you could cause trouble."

Weaver grinned again and shook his head. "What I don't understand is how she knew I was there."

"She said she sensed a 'foreign presence.' What *were* you doing there?"

"Checking on you. For all I knew you might have been meeting some other guy and keeping me on the string."

They walked to her dormitory hand in hand. Other couples were saying good-night under the lights around the front door. They stopped to watch. Cynthia's hand

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pressed his more tightly. He kissed her and noted her mouth tasted only of coffee. Her body was lean-muscled and hard under his hands, the breasts soft and yielding. She stood with her forehead bowed against his chest, letting him have his way with her. Then her hips began moving slowly, as though she were about to dance.

The lights in front of the door went off, then came on again. "I'm sorry, I've got to get in. They'll lock the door in a minute."

"Listen," he said hurriedly, "couldn't you stay out tonight, just for a while? What would happen if you were a little late?"

She drew him with her to the door, swinging his hand. "I'd probably lose what's left of my virginity, if I'm any judge of men."

At the door they kissed goodnight again. The old woman on duty inside rapped sharply on the glass and gestured for Cynthia to come in. Weaver could not bear to let her leave without giving her something. He took off his ring and searched for a finger it would fit. Her long, tapering thumb was the only one that came close. Slipping the ring over the second knuckle, he kissed her again, then watched while she ran past the old woman and through the empty foyer and disappeared.

That night the dreams began.

Each night they were the same: he found himself moving—not walking, simply moving—across the bitterly cold plain whose surface was broken with sudden crags and spires of ice, deep fissures which he was helpless to avoid. The intense cold burned his eyes and lungs. His terror mounted as he waited for the sound of the great bird somewhere above. He could not look up any more than he could avoid moving, any more than he could scream for help. When the rushing wings told him the bird was coming, he tried to lie down to avoid being cast into one of the abrupt chasms splitting away in every direction.

He sensed that when he fell it would be to his death. The ice spears were simply a means of torturing him; when the winged creature chose to kill him, it would do so some other way.

After three nights of these dreams, each followed by the discovery of the tall figure at the foot of his bed, Weaver began avoiding sleep.

Hughes watched him curiously. Each night, after the dreams, he had been awakened by Weaver's cries. The third night he promised to stay awake and rouse Weaver if he sensed anything wrong. Instead, he fell asleep in an armchair. When he woke, with a start, it was to Weaver's cries for help. The room was dark, yet he could not remember turning out the light.

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He took Weaver to the student infirmary. A receptionist questioned him and referred him to the psychiatric division. A doctor listened patiently while Weaver described the recurrent dream; he even made a few notes. Back in the reception room he set up an appointment for the following day and wrote out a prescription.

Weaver wanted to know what it was for.

"Something to help you sleep."

"But I don't want to sleep, I want to stay awake. The only thing that's keeping me alive is the fact that I can wake up. If this stuff puts me too far under . . ."

"Oh, come now."

Weaver refused the prescription, though he promised to return the next day for the appointment—if, as he told the psychiatrist, he could stay awake that long.

Hughes had left to attend class. Weaver walked across the campus, drugged by the sunshine and warmth. It would be so easy to sleep, he thought, and found himself sitting on a bench. Buildings appeared to waver through vistas formed by the trees. Couples lay stretched in the grass, talking or studying.

This time the dream was different.

He stood in the darkness, in front of a dark window which suddenly filled with light. Carmine glared at him, but when he looked at Cynthia, her face was altered: she was much older, and there were dark stains, like bruises, around her eyes. Her teeth were long and crooked; and when he tried to ask her what had happened, she suddenly laughed—and the sound recalled the cries that accompanied the approach of the bird in his dream of the frozen country.

Wake up! he commanded. He was still sitting on the bench. The sun was going down behind the trees; long shadows had spread across the grass. His heart was beating furiously. Sweating, he shivered and broke into a stumbling run.

There'd been something else. What? Something Cynthia showed him when she laughed—and then he remembered—the ring. She had the ring he'd given her at the door to her dormitory; that was why she'd laughed, and Weaver's mind was flooded with warnings against letting a witch gain possession of any object belonging to you.

He went in the kitchen entrance to the girls' dormitory. On a metal-topped table just inside was a stack of white shop coats worn by the boys who bussed the dishes. A group of them, already wearing their work clothes, were eating at a table in the corner of the kitchen. Through the doorway beyond was the cafeteria line.

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Weaver put on one of the shop coats and made his way out past the cafeteria line. No one noticed him. In the hall outside he moved rapidly until he located a flight of stairs going up. Girls were coming down, but he climbed past them, head lowered. Someone said something to him, but he didn't pause.

The third floor. He searched rapidly. A few girls were still emerging from their rooms. They stared openly, startled to find him there. Sooner or later, he knew, one of them would mention his presence, and the dorm supervisors would come looking for him.

Her room was at the end of the hall. He turned the handle; it opened and he was inside, closing the door after him, turning the key before he looked around.

The room was like a mirror image, each half reflecting the other: twin beds with identical spreads in the corners, chests of drawers opposite each other, small student desks in the other two corners. Which half belonged to Cynthia? He could not even tell. And then he noticed the faint musky odor that permeated the room and began to gag.

Covering his nose and mouth with his handkerchief, he opened a window, turning the small crank rapidly. He breathed the fresh air, waiting for his stomach to grow quiet. Then he began searching the room.

Going through one of the chests, he found clothes that could only belong to Carmine and went to the other chest. Each drawer he pulled out to its limit and shuffled through the contents, running his fingers around front and back and sides. The chest yielded nothing; neither did the desk. He went to Cynthia's closet and searched the pockets of all her clothes, even turning her shoes upside down.

When he heard footsteps in the hall, he waited. When they stopped at the door, he stood up. The knob turned but the door held as the lock caught. There was a pause, then he heard a key being inserted; the door opened and Cynthia came in. Somehow he'd almost expected Carmine to be with her, but she was alone.

"How'd you know I was here?" he asked.

"One of the girls told me she saw you on the stairs. She thought it was a little desperate, but very romantic."

He studied her for some trace of the crone-like woman of the dream he'd had on the bench. "More like 'very desperate'. I've come for that ring I gave you the other night."

Cynthia hadn't moved from the door. "I don't have it."

"I've got to have it back; it's important."

"I'm sure it is, but I don't have it. I'm sorry. I put it in my desk

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drawer that night, but the next morning I couldn't find it."

"Did you say anything to Carmine?"

"She said she hadn't seen it."

Weaver began searching Carmine's side of the room. Cynthia didn't help, but she offered no protest as he went through the chest of drawers and desk. In a lower desk drawer he found a black robe and a number of packages of herbs, wrapped in plastic, and a half-pound square of wax. There were also several old books, one of them without a cover, the paper brown and dry with age. Flipping the pages, Weaver saw crude woodcut illustrations of witches with dogs or cats, and various diagrams, one of them the five-pointed star.

Then he saw a metal Band-Aid box. When he shook it, he heard the solid clunk of metal inside. Opening it, he found the ring—with a small wax figure molded inside it.

Behind him Cynthia caught her breath. "It's you."

It was—he recognized the shape of the body, the slope of the shoulders, the general proportions of the body. The wax was pockmarked with holes especially around the area of the chest and stomach and groin.

"What's she been sticking me with?"

They searched until Cynthia found an old-fashioned hatpin, six inches long and with a black glass bead at one end, next to a hairbrush on the desk.

Weaver matched the point to the wax figure; they fitted exactly. "That explains a lot of things."

Cynthia avoided his eyes. "What are you going to do?"

"First get rid of this. Can I just break it up, or what?"

"I don't know. I'm not sure. I never had anything to do with something like this," and when she saw that he was watching her closely, she added, "honestly. Let's look in some of those books and see if it says."

They read quickly, scanning pages, until Weaver said, "Here it is."

Cynthia joined him. In the hall outside they heard girls coming up from the cafeteria, doors opening and closing. Music from phonographs and radios drifted into the room. It was dark enough to be difficult to read, but they left the lights off.

"You'd better get into your robe," Weaver told her.

She undressed by the bed, making no effort to conceal herself, laying her clothes across the back of a chair. When she had the robe on, she took a small bottle from Carmine's desk and swallowed a few drops. Weaver twisted a few pieces of newspaper together and put them in the bottom of the metal wastecan. Then he slipped the ring off the wax figure, pinch-

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ing the hips to remove it. As he did so he experienced a strange, weakening sensation.

Cynthia knelt in the middle of the floor. With his lighter she set fire to the paper, then prompting herself with Carmine's book she chanted softly:

"I am that woman of Ea that hath power over thee, Ashtoreth; listen to my incantation. Let the wicked god, the wicked demon, the demon of the desert, the demon of the mountain, the demon of the sea, the demon of the marsh —let him depart. May his power over this man be broken. May he trouble him no more, but seize upon another. Spirit of the heavens, conjure it! Spirit of the Earth, conjure it!"

She extended her hand. Weaver gave her the wax figure. She kissed it and dropped it into the wastecan. The paper was burning rapidly, smoke was filling the room. Leaning over to look, Weaver saw the wax melt, blazing up in the heat. He opened the other window and fanned the smoke out with another piece of newspaper.

Cynthia remained kneeling until the fire was out. "There, you should feel better."

Her voice was weak, and he helped her stand; when he put his arms around her, she was trembling. He kissed her, forcing himself to do so in spite of the fetid, overripe taste of the potion. Her eyes were closed. When he pulled the robe up, she raised her arms submissively so he could draw it over her head. Then she let him lead her to the bed and waited, eyes closed again, while he undressed.

Later, lying beside her in the dark, he knew better than to sleep. He let his breathing grow deep and regular, until he was sure she was asleep, then slipped from the bed and found the square of wax in Carmine's desk drawer. From the hairbrush on the desk he gathered half a dozen hairs and molded them into the wax. In the dim light he saw the heavy buttocks and thighs, the rounded face and thick, hooked nose.

Cynthia still slept. He spat in the face of the figure.

"Where are you, Soignatore, Usore," he whispered in a singsong, "Dilapidatore, Dentore, Concisore, Divoratore Seductore, Seminatore? Hear me, hear the voice of thy devoted servant's nephew, great Rama, also well-beloved of you. Oh, ye makers of hatred and prolongers of enmity: I conjure you by who has created you for this work, I conjure you to complete this work. Let Carmine my enemy suffer! Let this pierce her body and scorch her, nerve and bone! May she shriek in pain!"

Taking the hatpin, he drove it through the stomach of the wax figure, again and again, with such force that the figure bent, as

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though in pain, in his hand. He drove the pin through the temples, the nose, and both eyes.

He took a second piece of wax and from Cynthia's hairbrush gathered several long, dark hairs and began molding them into a figure. Long slender arms and legs, small breasts, the high brow and wide-spaced eyes.

"Neil?" her voice called from the bed, "what are you doing, darling?"

"Nothing. Go back to sleep, Cynthia."

By the starlight coming in the windows he saw her extend her hand. "Come back to bed."

He smiled at her. "I'll be there in a minute."

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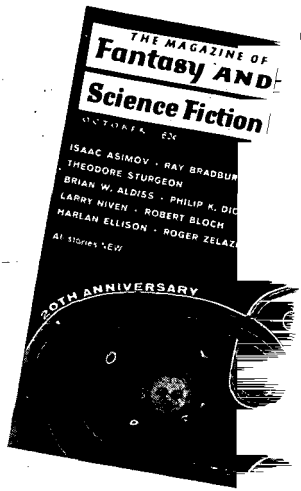

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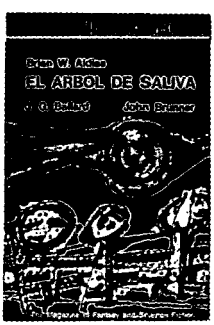

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